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"YOU HAVE BEEN SPARED TO SEE YOUR DAUGHTER, MR. TREPHUS," SAID DOCTOR ROSS, AS IVY KNELT BY HER FATHER'S SIDE.

## THE DOCTOR'S WARD.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

SOMEWHERE in the great wilderness of London, somewhere in that region equally removed from the gaudiness of fashion and the squalid poverty of the East end, there stands a square known throughout the metropolis as respectable and convenient.

The place was called Dolby-square, and contained over twenty houses, but only one of them concerns us. No. 19 was inhabited by a doctor, Basil Ross by name, a man of great skill and unremitting patience, who, alone and unaided, had fought his way to fame, who at thirty-five had made for himself both name and fortune.

No one who consulted Dr. Ross once ever cared to employ another doctor. There was something in the gentle decision of his manner, in his

strong, firm will, which seemed to act on them as a charm. At thirty-five the doctor, who had begun life as an assistant to a country surgeon, found himself one of the most popular physicians of the day.

People wondered he did not move. With his income, they said, he might have lived in Harley-street, have kept an open landau, a close carriage and pair, and yet been very far from being ruined.

Basil Ross smiled a little when these reports reached him.

"What would be the use of a fine house to me?" he said, laughing. "I am never at home, except for meals and to see patients."

That was what it had come to. Basil's idea of home had gone down to a place where he ate and slept and saw his patients; and yet he was not a reckless, dissolute man. His whole life might have been cited as a model of decorum, only he had never known a home brightened by a woman's loving presence.

From twenty to thirty he had been too busy

fighting an uphill fight to understand what he was losing. Then he took the house in Dolby-square, invited his sister, and settled down as a bachelor.

He had never been in love; truth to say he scorned the tender passion. He had seen the prettiest women of the day, and never felt a ray of interest in them apart from his profession. His was not a high standard of womanhood. He thought of women chiefly as divided into two great classes—pretty, over-dressed dolls, who delighted in spending the money their husbands earned, and grave, sensible housekeepers, good to sew on buttons or see to puddings, but as companions and friends worse than useless.

He sat in his consulting-room one bleak November day; the sky without was a grey-lead hue, the wind whistled cheerlessly, and the thick crimson curtains were closely drawn; a large fire burnt in the grate, a long string of patients, despite the inclement weather, had been to claim his attention, and Basil leaned back in his chair as though weary.

"What is the use of it all?"

That was the question which passed rapidly through his brain as he tossed the fees taken that morning into a drawer of his writing table; the guineas came thick and fast, but what extra happiness did they bring him? It dawned on Basil for the first time that November day how little of enjoyment or pleasure there was in his life.

He toiled just as hard as he had done in his poverty-stricken student days, and the little delights, the petty recreations which had afforded him such enjoyment then had vanished.

"I must be getting hipped myself," decided the Doctor, hastily. "What can I want with pleasure at my time of life—a man nearly forty! Besides, what amusement could ever interest me as much as my profession! Bah, I must be getting childish."

He rose to leave the room, when a prolonged peal at the door bell made him reseat himself. His consulting hours were over, but this, perhaps, was a patient from a distance.

The page brought him a card inscribed "James Trefusis."

A vague instinct told Basil that somewhere or other he had heard that name before. It had a strange, familiar ring in his ears. He told his servant to show the stranger in, and again and again he marvelled where and how he had heard of James Trefusis.

His patient's appearance did not help him. He saw a tall, bearded man, not far from fifty years of age, his face bronzed with foreign travel, a perilous brightness in his eyes, and a hectic colour in his thin cheeks.

Before he spoke a word Basil knew perfectly his visit was useless; consumption had set his mark upon him as a victim.

Mr. Trefusis came to the point at once.

"I have come to you, doctor, to be set to rights. I am not well, very far from it, in fact, and I have set my heart on being cured by New Year's Day. I have a most particular appointment then."

Basil thought there was little chance of his being able to help it, but he only asked a few medical questions. Mr. Trefusis answered them promptly; reserve was quite foreign to his nature.

"And you think I shall be all right by New Year's Day, doctor? I have a most particular appointment then; can't be put off!"

"I will do my best," said Basil, simply; "but I tell you frankly you ought to have come here before."

"I never felt ill before," declared Trefusis. "I have never had a day's illness in my life."

"Fortunate for you; you have had good luck."

"I don't know, it's been precious slow in coming."

"I meant your health."

"And I meant money. I am a promoter of companies, Dr. Ross. Forty-two glorious ideas have I started, forty-two brilliant plans have I put in working order and they failed—failed, everyone of them—fell as flat as doormats."

"Their failure does not seem to have affected you particularly."

"Affected me. Only it just drove me from home and family, and made me an exile in the wide world. Seven years ago, Dr. Ross, my wife died," here the man's voice almost broke; "my twenty-first company had just gone smash then, and we were as poor as poor could be. I fancied I'd have to let the parish bury my poor girl!"

Basil looked his sympathy.

"But things didn't quite come to that. Her family—an awful proud set they were—came and made me a proposal; they'd give my darling a grave to lie in, and they'd take the children, and do for them handsome, provided I made myself scarce."

"Hard terms."

"Yes, considering I'd never done harm to any of 'em. Well, I thought and thought. I'd no money in the world but a bent sixpence and a crooked halfpenny, which wasn't much to start in life again with and provide for three children, who

had good, healthy appetites. I thought it over, and for their sakes I gave in!"

He was breaking down, the tears stood in his eyes.

Hastily Basil got up, unlocked the cupboard, and poured him out a glass of sherry. He drank it at one gulp, and went on,—

"I told my brother-in-law I'd go and leave the children to him and his wife; but I said, as to signing any papers, or giving up my own flesh and blood, I wasn't going to do it. If I made a little money and came home I should want my children. He smiled at that, and asked me if I expected well brought-up young people 'd care for a vagabond of a father that cut home. Doctor, I up and told him a man wasn't a vagabond because he was unlucky, and I said they'd hear nothing from me for seven years, and then, rich or poor, back I should come and claim my own!"

"I understand the appointment now."

"I don't expect you do. I left them a bit of an address where letters 'd find me, and I kissed my children and said good-bye. I mind now how they clung to me. Robert, the eldest, wasn't fifteen, my little Ivy but eleven; they cried as though their very hearts were breaking; for, you see, their mother was dead, and they'd never seen the aunt they were to live with."

"And you are going to claim them on New Year's Day?"

"You haven't heard the worst. My boy died within the year, they said he just pined away; there were only the girls left then, my pretty little girls. I was in Australia then. I got many a good idea, but somehow I never managed to make money. I came back to England from time to time, and went to the old place for letters, but there were none until last year, and I think what I found then did me more harm than my wife's death and all my difficulties."

"You mean your children were in trouble?"

"No. I got a letter from my brother-in-law, saying that Mabel was married—little Mabel, whom I'd left a child. He said her husband, an excellent young man, had made it a condition of the wedding that his wife should never associate with me. There were a few lines from the girl herself, saying they'd heard nothing of me for more than five years, and no doubt I'd sunk lower and lower. She was grown up now, she wrote, and able to make her own choice, and even if I came back, she didn't want anything to do with me. Her uncle and aunt were her adopted parents, and her love and duty must be theirs."

Dr. Ross took his patient's hand.

"I understand, such a letter was enough to break your heart."

"It did pretty near; then somehow the idea came to me I'd like to make my fortune after all. And then there was Ivy; she had always been my favourite child. I can't tell you how it was, doctor, but from that moment everything I touched succeeded. 'As lucky as Trefusis,' became a proverb out yonder. I made more money than I could count, and then I came home, and put my affairs into an agent's hands. I'd sent him money from time to time to invest, and he was a prudent man. I'm master of King's Langley now. I've a bijou villa at Regent's-park, and twenty-thousand a year."

"I hope you will live to enjoy them."

"Live, you must manage that. Only I want to claim my little Ivy, and make her mistress of King's Langley. I want to show her her old father never forgot her."

"Where is she?"

"I expect with her uncle and aunt. Mab and her husband live in London. I drove past their house yesterday, drove in my own carriage and pair," here he gave a smile of painful meaning. "I don't suppose Mab ever has a carriage stop at her door."

"Then her husband isn't well off?"

"Sub-manager of a small branch bank; not a penny over four hundred a year."

"And her uncle?"

"He's not rich, though he seemed a sort of Croesus to me in old times. I don't suppose he's more than a thousand a-year all told, and heaps of children."

"At least it was kind of him to take yours."

"I thought so at the time. I don't know, poor Rob was little trouble to him, and I know he got his money's worth out of my daughters, made them kind of nursery governesses to his own children."

"That will be all over now."

"Yes, doctor, I don't know why I have told you all this. I don't generally go about boring people with my family history."

"You have not tired me."

"Perhaps you have children of your own, sir, and understand a father's feelings."

"I am unmarried."

"Unmarried?"

Basil smiled at his surprise.

"I don't think I have ever had time," he said, simply; "by the time I could afford a wife all my habits were formed."

"And you are an old bachelor!"

"Yes."

"Don't you wonder what brought me here?"

"No; strangers are a frequent sight in my profession."

"Some years ago, when you weren't such a big man as you are now, I brought my wife to see you. You couldn't save her, but you smoothed her path to the grave. You guessed our poverty, and you would never take a fee, and yet you could not have taken more interest in the case had she been a duchess."

"I remember now," said Basil, slowly. "I had been wondering why your name seemed familiar to me."

"Well, doctor, you'll do your best for me!"

"Of course."

"And you think I shall be all right by New Year's Day? Oh, I want to run down to King's Langley and take my Ivy home."

"Do I understand you Miss Trefusis is living at King's Langley already?"

"Bless you, yes. Her uncle has a little place down there. He used to eat humble pie to the late possessor of the Court. They say he is awfully curious to know who has it now. What will he say when he hears it is his disreputable brother-in-law!"

"It will be a shock to him."

"Won't it, doctor?" as he rose to go. "You seem well-nigh as lonely as I am. Won't you look in on me sometimes on an evening?"

He gave his address, and Basil promised. He had taken a great fancy to the tall, bearded man who had made his fortune too late.

When Mr. Trefusis had departed Basil threw himself back in his chair and tried to remember his patient of other days, but he could only recollect a sweet, quiet face and dark-blue eyes.

"He cannot speak of her even now without breaking down," thinking of his late visitor. "There must be something in love, after all, to last through years—through death."

His hearth was lonely, his life was lonely, too. Slowly there came to Basil's heart a consciousness that he had made a great mistake—that he should have been happier had he, like other men, fallen a victim to Cupid's archery.

"Pooh, it is absurd," he muttered. "My digestion must really be out of order. What can make me dream of such nonsense!"

Hastily refreshing himself with a glass of sherry and a biscuit—Basil left the house and made a round of professional visits, and at last stopped his brougham at Mrs. Charles Talbot's, one of his oldest patients.

She was a rich woman, but not of the upper ten thousand.

She liked Dr. Ross, and generally got in all the conversation possible during his visits. A pretty young friend was spending the day with her, whom she introduced as Mrs. Pemberton.

"Poor thing," when Mrs. Pemberton had discreetly retired to leave her alone with the doctor. "She has a dull life of it. Only married about a year."

"I don't see anything dull in that. She is very pretty and stylish-looking."

"Yes, but she married a Tartar. She was an orphan, or something of the sort; lived with an uncle and aunt, who wanted to get rid of her. I suppose to marry John Pemberton and to be her own mistress seemed delightful."

"And isn't he kind to her?"





"In a sort of way. But he domineers over her, and his mother and sister do the same. They never weary of telling her what a good match the sub-manager of a small bank was for Mabel Trefusis."

"Ah," suppressing a start, "it is a pretty name, Trefusis."

At this moment Mrs. Pemberton returned in hat and cloak.

"You are not going?"

"I must, Dr. Ross; and the girls are coming to tea at five o'clock."

"Five o'clock! You will never be there."

"I must," her lip quivered. "They will be so offended."

Some impulse made Basil say,—

"Allow me to have the pleasure of driving you, Mrs. Pemberton. My brougham is at the door, and I am going in your direction!"

She blushed, and accepted gratefully. Too evidently, poor girl, she was afraid of her husband and his relations.

"Do you know, Mrs. Pemberton, I heard a great deal of you this morning. Can you not guess who from?"

"Perhaps you know my uncle, Mr. Howard, of King's Langley?"

"No. My informant was someone nearer to you—Mr. James Trefusis."

"My father!" she exclaimed with a start.

"Do not be afraid, Mrs. Pemberton. The secret is known only to me, and I assure you I have no intention of divulging it."

"My husband would be so angry." After a pause, "I hope Ivy will not hear of it."

"Why?"

"Because she has such romantic faith in father's return. All these years she has clung to the idea that he would come back. She is such a strange girl, she never considers her own interests. If she heard her father was in England she would brave Uncle Robert's displeasure, and run away from King's Langley."

"And you," said Basil, gently, "you are your own master. I tell you your father is here in London, within a stone's throw. I could take you there any morning in an hour. I would take you and bring you back. No one in the world need know of it."

"It is very kind of you."

"He has come back very ill, Mrs. Pemberton. He does not know it himself yet. I cannot bear to tell him, but I think when the day comes on which he was to have reclaimed his children he will be with their mother."

The tears filled Mabel's eyes.

"You will come," said Basil, gently; "you will gladden his eyes by the sight of you. Remember he is dying. He can be no future care to you. Think how it would soothe his last moments to know that the little secret on your name was not your true feeling—that you really have a daughter's love for him."

"I dare not go, Dr. Ross. My husband would never forgive me, and I think—here her voice grew hard and cold—"my father has only himself to thank for his misfortunes. He cannot really care for us; he ought not to try and blight our future by boasting of his relationship to us."

They stood at her own door then. Basil handed her out with ceremonious politeness. Then he returned to his brougham, and wondered whether he should tell James Trefusis of his attempt, and its failure.

He did tell him. James Trefusis sank very rapidly in the days that followed. He had taken a strange fancy to his doctor, and Basil was interested in the lonely man, so that it came about he spent most of his leisure in the pretty bijou villa the promoter of companies had furnished and embellished for his children's home.

He and his sister were not on comfortable terms. Miss Mabel feared he was turning rovine in her hands. She had a mutton chop broiled for his lunch every day, but he often absented himself from that meal altogether. An awful dread had seized the old maid that he was contemplating matrimony.

She need not have feared.

Mabel Pemberton's unnatural conduct had given Basil a fresh distaste for womankind. He

told her father the whole story. James Trefusis shook his head; he never mentioned Mabel's name again; his whole thoughts seemed centred on Ivy.

"Send for her," said Basil. "If you are afraid of a letter being suppressed I will go myself to King's Langley, and broach the news to her."

"I dare not send. You forget my solemn oath. I vowed by my dead wife's coffin that for seven years my children should be untroubled by me."

"But circumstances are different."

"Ah! But the oath remains."

A long silence.

"Rose," and the clear blue eyes looked questioningly at the doctor's face, "I want you to answer me one question. Don't deceive me from mistaken kindness—am I dying?"

"I fear so."

It was in the last December days, Christmas was almost come. James Trefusis looked thoughtfully into the fire.

"Shall I last till then—till the seven years are ended, and I am free to claim my darlings?"

"I hope so."

"I must make my will."

Basil stared.

"Is it possible you have not done so?"

"I always put it off. I meant to put it off until I had seen her; but I have made every inquiry. I have no shadow of doubt Ivy is gentle and true, like her mother. She has kept faithful to her father."

"We have Mrs. Pemberton's testimony of that."

"Ay. The Howards have not been kind to her—I know that. They have made the bread of dependance very bitter to her. Well, she will be free of them soon for ever."

"But she is a minor," objected Dr. Ross.

"Ay, but I shall not leave her to their guardianship."

"To whom, then?"

"To you. Doctor, you have been the truest friend I ever had. Promise me that you will take care of my child."

"I promise; but, remember, I have no wife to be a mother to Miss Trefusis."

"I know. I want you to be her personal guardian—Messrs. Chubb and Co., my agents, will be the other. They shall take all business matters off your hands."

"I cannot refuse you; but I warn you, I think you have made a bad choice."

That evening Messrs. Chubb and Co. were with James Trefusis—that is, the senior partners were. The "Co." was not bidden to the conference.

Mr. Trefusis stated his wishes; the lawyers listened with respectful attention.

"My dear sir," the elder exclaimed, when their client had finished, "the idea is preposterous. No young lady would submit to such coercion."

"I have made up my mind."

"Think of the embarrassment for Miss Trefusis."

"Her sister has married a proud, ambitious man, who breaks her heart. I'll save Ivy from such a fate."

"But—"

"Gentlemen," said Trefusis, calmly, "my mind is quite made up; nothing that you can say will move my determination."

They saw that he was in earnest, and as the management of his affairs was profitable employment, and brought them in a nice yearly sum, they prudently withdrew all opposition, and drew up the will with such speed that it received the testator's signature that night.

It was unusual. They would rather one of their clerks had prepared the will in due form, and after a seemingly delay they could have submitted it for Mr. Trefusis's signature; but he (Trefusis) was an obstinate man, and determined to have his own way.

"I shall sleep now," he said, as he saw the all-important document tied with red tape, and deposited in Mr. Chubb's pocket. "Whatever happens to me Ivy's future is secured."

"Secured! My dear sir, you have placed unlimited confidence in a man who is almost a stranger to you. I consider it a terrible risk!"

"I don't," returned the promoter of com-

panies, slowly. "I believe in first impressions. I knew Basil Ross was an honest man the first time I touched his hand."

"And I suppose he is aware of your flattering wishes respecting Miss Trefusis?"

"He has no idea of them."

"But you will tell him?"

"Certainly not; I would rather leave him free. I know that if he cannot love her he will protect my Ivy from all sorrow. I trust her to him with implicit confidence."

## CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHERE in the pleasantest of English counties stands the pretty village of King's Langley, and on the outskirts there rose an unpretentious white house, with meadow and paddock at the back, and flower-gardens in front. This was the Croft, a little homestead which for years had been in the possession of the Howards.

Mr. Howard and his wife sat over a late breakfast the morning after James Trefusis made his will.

Their eldest daughter was still in bed, her brother away at boarding-school, and the three younger children were pursuing their studies with their governess.

Mrs. Howard looked up from the newspaper.

"Robert, have you heard anything of that man?"

"Only what Mab wrote, that some doctor told her he was in London dying, and worried her to go and see him."

"And she very properly refused!"

"Yes. I daresay the doctor was some poverty-stricken wretch, who hoped she would pay his fees out of filial gratitude."

But his wife knew too much of the fashionable world to agree with that.

"Oh, no, Robert, it was Dr. Ross! He's one of the leading doctors."

"Who told you so?"

"Old Mrs. Pemberton always boasts of her friend Mrs. Talbot having no one else; he sees no one under his guinea, and it's five if he comes to them."

"Well, he'll have to wait a long while before anyone pays him five guineas for attending James Trefusis; but, Lena, keep this from Ivy."

"It was thinking of Ivy put it into my head. Do you know she actually remembers his absurd promise of coming back in seven years."

"I was talking to her about the children and what lessons they should do after Christmas. She just turned round with a little smile and said, 'But Papa will have come home then, and I shall be with him.'"

"Absurd!"

"But she believes it."

"She never had her sister's sense!"

"No, or she might have married instead of Mabel. Anyone could see it was Ivy John Pemberton thought of first."

"Well, we have married one of the girls respectably, and as to Ivy—"

"I don't want Ivy to marry. Kathleen is too fragile to be any help to me—she is sure to marry early; and Ivy will stay here and help me with the children."

Kathleen was one year older than Ivy; at nineteen her parents believed her certain to make a wealthy marriage. Kathleen would have been most happy to confirm their hopes, only at present the opportunity had not been granted her.

She came in then, very pretty in a certain wax-doll sort of style; she kissed her parents languidly, and sat down to breakfast.

"What makes you so late, Katy?"

"Mrs. Webb has been here, mamma, to begin my dress, and she was telling me about the Court. She went there last night to see the housekeeper, and she says it is like fairyland. They say Mr. Chubb has bought it for one of his clients."

The mother smiled at her daughter—the same thought was in both their minds. What a charming thing it would be for Kathleen to be mistress of the Court! Mr. Chubb's client.

having purchased a lovely property, would certainly desire a wife. Where could he find a prettier, more affable one than Miss Howard of the Croft?

Breakfast over, Kathleen wandered carelessly about the house; presently she turned into the schoolroom.

"Ivy, have you mended my dress?"

"Not yet."

"But I want it."

"I have not had time—I will do it this afternoon."

"You never do what you ought to do. I wonder you are not ashamed to eat up papa's bread and yet be so idle!"

She flounced out of the room, and Ivy turned to the children.

Lessons ended the children bounded away, and Ivy's weary head was buried in her hands.

"Oh, father, best beloved!" moaned the girl in her sadness, "when will you be here! The time has seemed so long, father; but I know you have not forgotten—you couldn't disappoint poor Ivy after all these years. It seems too wonderful to be true, darling, that in ten days' time you will be here, and I shall be free from uncle's harshness and Aunt Lena's slights. Shall you be very much altered, father? And will you know your Ivy?—she would know you anywhere. Only ten days more! but, oh! how long they'll be in passing! I can't believe it even yet that I am to be happy."

"I think they will miss me just a little—the children, I mean; but I couldn't stay here for them. I want my father—I have wanted him all these years, and felt sure he would come."

"If Mab had only waited—if she'd have believed me, and put off her marriage just one little year—she'd have been happier. I don't think she really loves John. I have seen her shudder when he kissed her, and tremble when he spoke crossly. I wonder people ever marry—married people always seem cross or disappointed. Of course, I can never marry anyone, and I think I'm glad; father will have me all to himself, and I could never leave him after all these long years of parting."

The girl who delivered herself of this sentiment, James Trefusis's youngest child, was just eighteen, and as innocent of the world and its ways as she well could be.

She roused herself from her reverie to do Kathleen's commands; but as she stitched away she wondered just a little what would become of her cousin when she was no longer at the Croft. Mrs. Howard could not afford a lady's-maid, and Kathleen had no notion of helping herself.

"I think they will miss me just a little," thought Ivy; "but, oh! how delightful it will be to leave the Croft and go home once more!"

Christmas Day brought her a letter from her sister, Mrs. John Pemberton—a loving, tender epistle; for, different as they were in character, the two sisters were fondly attached. Perhaps Mab was off her guard. Perhaps she thought Ivy too childish to read between the lines; for her sister discovered more of the unhappiness of the Pembertons' married life through that letter than she had ever suspected.

Mab regretted that she could not invite Ivy for Christmas; but Mrs. Pemberton and her daughter were coming, and there would be no room. There was just an expression of annoyance at their frequent visits, and then Mab added,—

"I have not forgotten your hopes and dreams, Ivy, of all this New Year is to bring. We don't think alike, dear; but I can't bear for the disappointment to come too suddenly on you. Don't wish too much your father's return, Ivy; for I fear he will never come. I heard accidentally through a stranger that he was in London, very ill!"

In London, very ill! If only the girl had known her father's address she would have gone to him had she had to walk every step of the way; but Ivy knew that London was a vast city, and that, nobody knowing his abode, she would be as far removed there from her father as at the Croft; so she waited.

But that last week seemed longer than any month of the seven years that had preceded it;

and when she came down to breakfast on New Year's Day even her aunt remarked her pale cheeks and heavy, bloodshot eyes.

Ivy and her pupils breakfasted with the others on holiday times, and so the girl's troubled, anxious face was exposed to comment.

"It is mere folly," said Mr. Howard, testily. "I tell you, Ivy, there is no more chance of your having news of your father to-day than there has been any time these seven years."

"I shall hear to-day!" said Ivy, faintly; "something tells me that if he is alive he will come or write."

"He will not enter my doors!"

"Then I can meet him outside," returned Ivy, wistfully; "the snow and cold won't matter, so that we are together."

A prolonged knock at the front door. Mr. Howard glanced at his watch.

"Half-past nine; too late for the post."

Two bright pink spots burned in Ivy's cheeks. She fixed her eyes on the door. The housemaid soon appeared.

"A gentleman is asking for Miss Trefusis, ma'am!" she said, addressing her mistress.

"Miss Trefusis!" For years that sound had been unheard at the Croft; the girls had been called simply Miss Mabel and Miss Ivy. Their uncle could not bear the name of the man he hated.

Mrs. Howard glanced at her husband.

"A gentleman, Brooks!" she said, inquiringly.

"Yes, ma'am;" confusedly.

"Ask his name."

Ivy had risen, but Mr. Howard's outstretched arm cut off her escape.

A moment more and the servant returned with a card, "Basil Ross, M.D."

Mr. Howard looked bewildered. For a physician whose name was in everyone's mouth, whose horses were worth their weight in gold, to come thirty miles with a message to a girl he had never seen was in itself remarkable. He rose.

"You had better come with me, Ivy."

Basil Ross felt his heart ache as he gazed on the girl of whom he had heard so much—beautiful, desolate and sad—dressed plainly, even to meanness, and yet with an air and grace a princess might have envied.

She forgot all ceremony; she ran to the stranger and took his hand.

"Papa, papa!"

"I have come to take you to him. Will you get ready at once!"

Mr. Howard drew himself up stiffly.

"Perhaps you are not aware, sir, this young lady is my ward!"

Basil smiled.

"I have understood from Mr. Trefusis that he left his children under your protection for seven years, which time expires to-day."

"It is unheard of, to take Ivy away after all my wife and I have done for her, the trouble and expense she has been to us."

Dr. Ross glanced at the girl's homely brown dress. He did not fancy the Howards had been to much expense for her toilet.

"That part of Mr. Trefusis's obligation I am empowered to discharge," he said, gravely. "A hundred a-year for each of his children, would, he thought, be a fair remuneration; that will, I think, be fourteen hundred pounds, since the boy died before he had been with you six months; and Mrs. Pemberton has been married a year."

Robert Howard stared.

"Fourteen hundred pounds! It is more than a year's income."

Ivy had left the room to make her preparations—the two men were alone.

"I never said anything about remuneration."

"Mr. Trefusis is most anxious you should accept it. I have the sum here in bank-notes."

But, disagreeable as he was, Mr. Howard had a certain amount of honesty.

"I think, if he can afford it, he ought to pay us something, but fourteen hundred pounds is ridiculous."

"Mr. Trefusis is perfectly satisfied the amount should be that sum."

Mr. Howard thought of his wife's perpetual demands for money, the fast increasing expenses of his family, and consented.

Basil counted the notes and handed them to him—a crisp, shining pile.

"There must be something good in the man, after all," concluded Mr. Howard. "I hope he has made enough to keep himself besides this; I shouldn't like to take it unless—"

Basil's eyes flashed.

"You need have no fear, sir."

Ivy entered as he finished speaking. He gave her his hand in perfect silence, and led her to the waiting carriage. Mr. Howard was left standing like a man awakened too suddenly from a dream.

"It can't be true," he told his wife. "Trefusis was the last man in the world to get rich."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Howard, slowly. "we used always to think him clever."

Meanwhile Ivy and her guide were travelling as fast as steam could take them to London. They talked very little—once Ivy put her hand gently on the physician's arm.

"Is he very ill?"

"I fear so."

"Dying?"

"My poor child, I think so; he is the victim of a fell disease, but he will not regret his death since he has lived long enough to see his child."

A servant, who admitted them at the bijou villa, declared Mr. Trefusis to be "just the same."

Basil, with innate delicacy, drew back. He felt that after seven years' separation father and daughter would meet best alone.

He stood in the ante-room, and the girl's joyous voice reached him.

"I knew you would come."

He could not hear the father's reply, but he guessed its nature, for Ivy answered with a sob,—

"Oh! father, stay with me."

"I can't, child; I would not if I could. Your mother is waiting for me in Heaven, and I shall tell her of her child's faith. Ivy, I think it would have broken my heart had you turned against me."

"I could not, I loved you."

"Mabel has."

"Poor Mab, I don't think she is too happy."

"She has her husband."

"Yes! he seemed so fond of her, and Mab thought it would be nice to have a home of her own and money to spend."

He stroked the girl's fair hair caressingly.

"Ivy, don't you want to know if I have come back rich?"

She shook her head.

"I never thought of that. I always felt you would come. I thought, however poor you were, we could have a little cottage together, and I would take in needlework or teach music, so that we might not be parted."

"Child," said Trefusis, faintly, "I am a rich man, and I don't think poverty will ever touch you; but there are worse troubles than being poor. I could not bear for you to be married a your sister has. I could not bear to see my Ivy an unhappy wife."

"I shall never marry anyone, dad!"

"Why not?" sharply.

"Because to marry one must fall in love, and I don't think it is in my nature."

Her father sighed.

"You will be a great heiress, child, and you have no relations near enough to guard you from fortune-hunters. I had a dread upon me you would be married for your money, and so people will tell you. I made a strange will, but I did it for your sake, child."

"It doesn't matter," said Ivy, quietly; "nothing matters if I must lose you."

"It matters very much. I couldn't die, Ivy, and know I had left you uncared for. You will be happy, my little girl, for he is a good man, and you can trust him."

The voice grew fainter. Basil Ross grew alarmed, and entered. The girl was kneeling by the sofa, her head pillowed on her father's breast. She could not see the change that had passed



over his features, but the physician saw and understood.

"Is that you, doctor?" asked the dying man, feebly.

"Yes! you see we were in time, Mr. Trefusis. You were spared to see your daughter."

"Thanks to you, Ivy," he turned to his child, "trust him for my sake; he has been the best friend I ever had when you hear all—remember that."

He put the girl's cool, thin hand into Basil's; then there came a long, long silence. Ivy suspected nothing. Basil knew that her face was resting on the dead.

Very, very gently he raised her, and supported her into the next room.

"Let me stay," she pleaded.

"He does not need you now, poor child. Don't you understand it is all over!"

"And he is dead!"

"He is with your mother," said Basil, earnestly. "If you remember how he loved her you will know it is happiness for them to be together."

"But I am all alone."

"Poor child!"

"Dr. Ross, he said someone would take care of me. Whom did he mean?"

"I think he meant me. I know he asked me to be your guardian."

She sighed.

"Are you sorry?"

"You don't understand. I have counted the weeks and days so until this meeting, and now—"

Basil looked at her with a great pity at his heart.

"It will comfort you in time to think how he loved you—how all your faith and trust was rewarded. Now tell me, will you stay here, and who shall I send for to be with you?"

"I will stay."

"But not alone!"

"Mab could not come."

"Shall I send for Mrs. Chubb? Her husband was your father's lawyer. She is a good-natured, kind-hearted sort of woman."

Ivy wondered he did not suggest his own wife; perhaps he guessed her thoughts.

"I live alone, excepting for my sister, and I do not think you would care for her—I mean she is not the sort of person one turns to in trouble."

He despatched a telegram, and in two hours Mrs. Chubb appeared—a pleasant, buxom matron of forty. She took Ivy into her arms and cried over her; she petted and comforted the girl in a way, Ivy think, only mothers know; and, after seeing her installed as mistress for the time of the bijou villa, Basil departed for the grim house in Dolby-square.

"I never saw Trefusis's will; but of course it is as he said, and the girl is left to my guardianship. Poor little thing," he reflected; "this will be but a dull home for her, but we must do our best, and she will not be left long under our care. Ivy Trefusis, one of the greatest heiresses of the day, is not likely to remain long unwooed and won."

He propounded the scheme to his sister at dinner. A ward of his, a young lady, was coming to make her home with them. Mehitable snorted disapproval—she hated young ladies.

"And," went on Basil, calmly; "no pains or expense must be spared in her reception and entertainment. She is a great heiress, and I am amply remunerated for anything I may spend on her comfort."

"I suppose you mean to marry her?"

Basil's face grew black as thunder.

"When I contemplate matrimony, Mehitable, I will inform you. Have the goodness to understand that Miss Trefusis is a mere child."

A prodigious sniff. Miss Mehitable always sniffed if she objected to anything.

"Of course, Mehitable, if you make Miss Trefusis's residence here unpleasant to her I can find her another house. It would entail a great deal of expense and annoyance, but—"

"There are six spare rooms," said Mehitable, mournfully; "she shall have her choice of them."

"And do try if you can't brighten up the place

a little; it will strike a young girl as very desolate. I'm sure our furniture looks to me as if it all came from Noah's Ark."

"Basil!"

"Well, my dear, if you went out and saw other people's drawing-rooms you'd understand, perhaps, that ours seems unlike them all."

"My mother was thought the most tasteful woman of her day. The chairs and tables that were good enough for her are good enough for me."

"But she's been dead nearly forty years."

"I think this house a most comfortable place."

"It's as dingy as a cellar."

"Nice indigo curtains and chocolate paper. What more would you have?"

"Much less in point of colour—something light."

"To want washing!"

"Well, Mehitable, the laundress hasn't yet refused to do our washing. Look here," and he took out his cheque-book, and hastily filled in a draft for twenty pounds. "Just take this, and see if you can't spend the money in making two rooms pretty and homelike for Miss Trefusis, just to make her feel she is among friends who care for her happiness."

Miss Mehitable was not generally addicted to dishonesty, but those twenty pounds never fulfilled their mission. They were added to the old maid's little hoard at the Post-office Savings Bank.

### CHAPTER III.

It seemed to Ivy as if she were in some terrible dream from which she must presently awaken.

The day she had so longed for was come. She had seen her father again, but he had left her, and she was just as lonely and deserted as when she had got up that morning at the Croft.

She sobbed herself to sleep. Kindly Mrs. Chubb, who sat and watched her, decided James Trefusis must surely have been mad when he decided his last will and testament.

"She is a mere child," thought the puzzled matron. "I don't suppose she has ever thought of a lover, and Dr. Ross must be thirty-five if he is a day."

She and Ivy were good friends. She showed the motherless girl every kindness during the sad days when they were together.

It was she who answered Mrs. Howard's pressing offers of coming to her niece's assistance—she who defended Ivy when Mr. Pemberton and his wife came to reproach her for her desert.

"There was no deceit in the matter," said the good lady, bluntly. "Miss Trefusis believed in her father and your wife did not—that's all the difference, Mr. Pemberton."

The young husband's face grew livid.

"My wife is the eldest sister—she ought to be Mr. Trefusis's sole heiress, if he had anything to leave."

"He had plenty," returned Mrs. Chubb, coolly. "This house, and the Court at King's Langley—furniture, carriages, horses, and jewels, besides about half-a-million of money. Don't you think it's a pity you thought yourself too good for your father-in-law's acquaintance?"

"I daresay he has remembered Mabel," said the banker, placidly. "It would be absurd to leave so much to a single girl like Ivy."

"You are to be invited to the funeral, Mr. Pemberton, and the will is to be read directly afterwards."

"I shall certainly be present."

"I don't like the will myself," declared Mrs. Chubb; "and my husband protested against it, but Mr. Trefusis was just as obstinate as a rock."

Considering the wealth of the dead man there were very few followers at his funeral. All returned to the house, and when Ivy and Mrs. Chubb went to meet the mourners they found Mr. Howard, Mr. John Pemberton, Dr. Ross and the lawyer, who held the all-important document in his hands.

Mr. Chubb looked troubled.

"I wish to say," he began, hurriedly, "that Dr. Ross is an entire stranger to the contents of this will. It was drawn up by the express desire

of my late client. I represented to him the serious inconvenience and embarrassment it might occasion to the parties concerned, but Mr. Trefusis persisted in his original wish."

It was a very short document. Ivy's name was mentioned first. She was left entirely to the guardianship of Mr. Ross and Messrs. Chubb, solicitors, of the Inner Temple.

It was directed that until her majority she should reside under the care of the physician, and a liberal allowance was to be made for her support.

Then came the clause so distasteful to Mr. Chubb.

"And bearing in mind my daughter's youth and inexperience I do desire and pray that she and my friend Basil Ross take each other for man and wife, and enjoy together all the property, real and personal, I leave behind me; but if, after due consideration, my daughter refuses to marry Dr. Ross, then everything shall revert to him, and she shall have a portion of ten thousand pounds upon her marrying with the consent of her then guardians. And if Dr. Ross refuse the hand of my daughter then I bequeath my whole property to him in trust for her sole use and benefit so long as she shall remain unmarried, and I trust him to judge if her husband be worthy of her, and if she marry, to use his own discretion as to the disposal of her fortune."

There was breathless silence as the solicitor finished.

Ivy sat with two deep pink spots on her cheek; then her head fell back suddenly on Mrs. Chubb's shoulder, and she fainted away.

When she came to herself she was lying on a sofa in the pretty drawing-room all alone. She put one hand to her aching head and tried to think. Alas! too soon it all came back to her.

"I have got to live in this house three years, and all the time he will be thinking I want to marry him! Oh, it is wretched!"

Enter Mrs. Chubb with tea and toast. She was one of those women who believe a cup of tea a remedy for all ills.

Ivy turned to her with trembling lips.

"Where is he?"

"Who, dear?"

"Dr. Ross."

"Downstairs with my husband. He seems as much troubled and put about as you are."

"Why is he waiting?"

"Don't you remember, dear, it was settled he should take you home with him to Dolby-square?"

"Oh!"

"It was your father's own doing, dear. He set such store by Dr. Ross."

"He looks a good man," half-dreamily.

"He's good enough, but he's much too old for a pretty, fairy-like creature like you."

Ivy sighed.

"Please, don't," she said, gently. "I never mean to marry anyone, and now I am afraid Dr. Ross will think he ought to propose to me."

The brougham was at the door. Ivy saw it, and knew it was waiting for her. She turned to Mrs. Chubb.

"Will you ask Dr. Ross to come here, please?"

She had seen him often since her father's death—had grown to think of him as a kind friend, and learned to be glad he was her guardian; but if she had seen him now for the first time she could not have been more terribly embarrassed.

Only one look at his face—at the bewildered expression of it—told his confusion far exceeded hers, and, woman-like, she grew calm, and composed herself just by the effort to put him at ease.

"I wanted to tell you," she began, gently, "that we need not trouble ourselves about my father's will. Dad was so anxious about me. I daresay he never thought how strange it sounded."

"I think," said Basil, with knitted brows, "if you will consent to come to Dolby-square all can be arranged."

"How!" very icily.

"I can, as the will directs, in all possibility, take all fitting care of your property, and transfer

it and yourself to another's keeping when you have chosen your future husband."

"I shall never have a husband."

"Your father trusted you to me," went on Basil, gravely. "I will take what care of you a brother might. I will do my utmost to make you happy, and promise faithfully never to oppose your choice."

"Thank you. You said you had a sister; you must tell her about—"

"About the provisions of your father's will?—most certainly not."

"Is she older or younger than you?"

"Much older."

"Oh!"

"I fear you will find her a dull companion, but it seems the best arrangement I can make for you. Perhaps you have young friends you would care to invite on a visit?"

"I have no friends."

"Mr. Pemberton has been telling me his wife hopes to see a great deal of you, and that his mother will call on you. I think when your first months' of mourning are over we shall manage to make you happy amongst us."

"I shall never be happy again. Don't you see," she sobbed, "what long years of loneliness stretch out before me. I have lost my darling, and may live to be an old, old woman before I can go to him."

Basil smiled half sadly.

"I think you will find other love to replace that you have lost."

Miss Trefusis's worldly possessions had already reached Dolby-square. Perhaps Basil doubted Miss Mehitable's taste, for, although he had given her that cheque he made a great many purchases himself on behalf of Ivy's home.

Two rooms on the first floor had been apportioned to his guest. Originally, these rooms communicated, but the door had been removed, and replaced by a heavy eastern curtain; some soft fur rugs had been scattered about the sitting-room, and a new suite purchased for it; there were white lace muslin curtains at the windows, and a jardinière full of hardy ferns. It was not so pretty as Mr. Trefusis's bijou villa, but it was a good deal better than anyone could have expected who had seen the room one week before, shrouded in Miss Mehitable's indigo moreen.

In perfect silence Basil and his ward entered the gloomy house. He led the way up the broad staircase to the little sanctum prepared for her. A bright fire played in the grate; the soft rays of a moderator lamp shone on the new furniture, and gave it a pretty, homelike look.

Basil placed a chair for his companion.

"I hope you will try to feel at home. I have engaged a maid to wait on you, and your father's carriage will be sent here for your use. I'm not accustomed to young ladies; but, believe me, I sincerely wish you to be happy here."

"And this is to be my own sitting-room?"

"Yes. I sent to Maudie's for some new books for you. The piano is one your father chose. I want you to understand you are a very important young lady," he added, in a lighter tone, "and most of your wishes can be gratified. Mr. Chubb fixed your private allowance at twenty pounds a month, but if you find it insufficient let me know."

She took the pretty purse he handed her, and then she looked up into his face with a strange, wistful expression on her lips.

"Dr. Ross, why are you so kind to me?"

"Because, short as was our acquaintance, I had a very real regard for your father."

Her eyes filled.

"You can't think how it pleases me to hear you say so. All these years I have heard him misjudged and harshly spoken of."

Basil smiled sadly.

"I think, even if he had not appointed me your guardian, I must have taken an interest in you. It seemed to me so unspeakably touching that he should be restored to you for so brief a space."

"And you knew he could not live?"

"I knew it from the first."

Left alone, Ivy burst into tears. There was something so strange and solemn in this home-coming that she could not restrain her grief.

She saw the care and trouble Dr. Ross had taken for her, and knew that she owed it to his regard for her dead father.

"If his sister is like him I might have been very happy here but for dear papa's will," was her final reflection, and then the door opened to admit a neat maid-servant.

"Dinner at seven, please, Miss Trefusis, and shall I help you dress?"

She was the daughter of Basil's coachman, and had been selected by the doctor as maid to the heiress. Mrs. Chubb had purchased a handsome mourning outfit, which Mary had carefully unpacked. She dressed her young lady in a soft black grenadine, heavily trimmed with crape; she put jet ornaments on the fair white throat and rounded arms, fastened a white rosebud in the golden hair, and asked,—

"Shall I show you the way to the drawing-room, miss, or will you wait upstairs until you hear the gong?"

Ivy hesitated.

"It's much nicer up here, miss," suggested the maid, respectfully. "There hasn't been a fire in the drawing-room since last Easter, and it'll strike like an ice well."

"Then I will stay here."

"The doctor, you see, miss, sits in his study, and Miss Ross in the dining-room. Have you seen her, miss?"

"No," wondering at the omission.

"She's a peculiar lady, Miss Trefusis. Very stiff in the back. She's very proud."

"Is she like the doctor?"

"Not the least in the world. The doctor is fifteen years younger, and just an angel, if ever one walked about in a black coat and tall hat, as father says—who's driven him for years; but Miss Mehitable—"

The pause was most expressive. It did not impress Ivy in her hostess's favour.

"She's very pious, you see, Miss Trefusis," went on the maid, apologetically. "She's been out the live long afternoon at a committee meeting for supplying cabmen with pocket testaments. She came home just now drenched to the skin."

All further conversation was stopped by the sound of the gong. Ivy went timidly down the broad staircase, when she saw the doctor in front; he turned with a look of relief.

"Let me take you in to dinner!"

The dining-room almost froze Ivy. It was furnished after Miss Mehitable's own heart, with the ancient treasures which had belonged to her mother.

Miss Mehitable herself, in a hideous chestnut-coloured merino trimmed with grey braid, sat at the head of the table, her thin hair parted down the middle, and adorned at the back with a ridiculous bow of ribbons to match her dress. Her face was vinegar in a degree; the doctor's lavish expenditure in the last week had driven her frantic.

She dared not remonstrate, but she had no kindly feeling for the girl who had been the cause of what she deemed his reckless extravagance.

"Miss Trefusis, this is my sister Mehitable. Let me present to you my ward, Ivy Trefusis!"

Miss Ross extended her flabby fingers, which made Ivy feel as if she had come into close contact with a fish. Then they sat down—peas soup, plentiful but homely, leg of mutton and rice pudding. Ivy decided her host was a single man. The wine was put on the table and some oranges. Ivy ate one, and then obeyed Miss Mehitable's signal.

The drawing-room justified Mary's description of its temperature. It was furnished in brown holland so stiff and slippery that Ivy had much ado not to roll off her uncomfortable high-seated chair; Miss Ross sat opposite, with some knitting in her hand.

"You will be very dull with us, Miss Trefusis?"

"I think not. I am used to a quiet life."

"We never go anywhere."

"I am glad"—she glanced at her deep mourning—"for I don't think I could bear gaiety just yet."

"Have you known Basil long?"

"Dr. Ross? about a week."

"Ah! you've not found him out yet."

Dr. Ross came in then, followed by the coffee tray.

His sister exclaimed in surprise,—

"You here, Basil! Whatever has made you desert your study?"

"It is very cold, and I fancied a cup of coffee."

But he never touched the coffee; he devoted himself to Ivy's entertainment until, at the stroke of nine, Miss Mehitable arose.

"Good-night!" she said to Miss Trefusis. "I make it a rule never to be up after nine."

No kindly wishes for her guest's repose, no sympathy or gentleness, such things were not in Miss Mehitable's nature; she stalked out of the room and banged the door.

Basil kept silent for a minute, then he crossed the room and stirred the fire into a ruddy blaze.

"Ivy," he asked, suddenly, "if I am to be your guardian, don't you think I might call you by your Christian name?"

"I should prefer it."

"I want to know whether you would like to have a companion."

"A companion?"

"You have seen my sister; now you must guess for yourself; you will receive little kindness or consideration at her hands. Aren't you afraid of the lonely life before you? Wouldn't you like me to find you a young lady to read with you, walk with you, and talk to you?"

"I should hate it!"

"I thought it would be such a nice arrangement for you," he said, dejectedly.

"I should get so tired of her. Just fancy being shut up perpetually with one person."

"I cannot fancy it; it would drive me mad."

"Did you always live here, Dr. Ross?"

"Not always; why?"

"The house looks as if it had gone on and on just the same for years."

"That is my sister's doing; she hates change."

"Does she live with you always?"

"Yes."

"And yet you said anyone with you always would drive you mad!"

He smiled.

"I don't think Mehitable is with me much; for days and days I never see her except at meals."

"Why?"

"I don't know; I go my way and she goes hers. We have not much in common."

"Doesn't it make her unhappy?"

"Not the least in the world!"

"If I had had a brother," said Ivy, with a great stress on the pronoun, "I should have expected to be always with him, and share all his hopes and fears—to be part of himself."

Her blue eyes glistened.

Basil thought how lovely she was, and how soon she would find someone who would let her be always with him, and let her share his hopes and fears, and be part of himself. Some one! Ah! yes, but not a brother.

"You had a brother once?"

"Yes, he and I were just all the world to each other. It almost broke my heart when he died. Oh! if Rob had only lived!"

"I shall be a poor substitute, I fear," said Basil, sadly; "but I want you to believe my only object is to make you happy. Ivy"—and he took her hand almost solemnly—"forget all that troubles you in your father's will, and trust me as you would have trusted Rob."

"How good you are to me!"

"Am I? I am not used to women. I am not a very suitable person to take care of a fragile, delicate child like you, Ivy, but I mean to do my best. This is a dull home for you," he went on gravely, "and I don't see my way to making it much brighter. Girls want balls and picnics and all that sort of thing to make them happy, don't they?"

"Not all girls."

He pressed her hand gravely, and bade her good-night.

So ended Ivy's first night in her guardian's home.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE time passed on. Ivy Trefusis settled down to her new life, and if the old house in Dolby-square were very different from the bright home she had looked forward to with her father at least she was happier far than she had ever been at the Crofts.

"I have an invitation for you, Ivy," said her guardian, a little gravely, one bright June evening, when dinner was over, and the two had adjourned to the drawing-room, where Miss Mehitabel had fallen asleep over her knitting.

"I don't want to go anywhere."

"Nonsense," returned Basil, bluntly; "you mustn't talk like that. Mrs. Talbot gives a ball next month, and she has set her heart on your appearing at it. After that she is going abroad, and she wants me to send you with her."

"Abroad!"

"Through Switzerland, I think she said, and home through Germany and the Black Forest. It would be a splendid change for you, Ivy; you are looking very white and thin. I have been wondering lately whether London suited you."

"I had rather not go."

Basil looked thoughtful—at last a light dawned on him.

"You are thinking you would not like to incur such an obligation, but you may dismiss that fear, child. In travelling parties each pays their own share. I could hand Mrs. Talbot a cheque before you started."

"You don't understand," Ivy stamped her foot impatiently. "I like Mrs. Talbot extremely, but I don't want to go to her ball, and I won't go abroad with her."

"You won't! Flat rebellion!"

"I think it is very unkind of you to suggest it."

"I mean it in all kindness, Ivy. I thought you would have been delighted."

"I am not."

"You don't seem to understand the position, child," said the Doctor, half wearily. "You ought to go into society and see different people."

"Why?"

Basil bit his lip. He objected to the question. She ought to have understood what he had left unsaid.

"I stand in your father's place, Ivy," he began, a little pompously.

"He would never have wanted to get rid of me. If you are tired of me, Dr. Ross, and want to send me away from Dolby-square, why can't you say so!"

"I am not tired of you," he rejoined, coldly; "but I know the world, and you do not."

"What has that to do with Mrs. Talbot's invitation I should like to know?"

"Do you know what people will say if I keep you shut up here?" asked Basil, with more of pain than anger in his voice. "They will say that, taking advantage of your father's confidence, I was cutting you off from all society in the hope of securing you for myself."

Ivy's cheeks flamed.

"They couldn't."

"They would! I met Chubb yesterday, and he asked me, with a sarcastic smile, when I should require his aid to draw my marriage settlements."

"How could he!"

"You see how it is," said Basil, gently. "If I seem to keep you at home it will be noised abroad that I wish to prevent you meeting eligible suitors."

"And if I meet the eligible suitors what next, pray, Dr. Ross?"

He looked grave.

"You will have to choose between them. I shall have to resign you to a husband's keeping, and my guardianship will be a thing of the past."

"How glad you'll be."

"Was that taunt deserved, Ivy?"

"No," exclaimed the girl, penitently. "I think I am cross and out of sorts; you must forgive me."

"And I may tell Mrs. Talbot you accept her invitations!"

"I suppose so."

"You foolish child, you don't know how much pleasure is in store for you."

She looked at him with a strange earnestness in her dark blue eyes.

"Dr. Ross."

"What is it? Surely you are not frightened of me, Ivy?"

"No, only I want to ask something."

"Ask away."

"May I come back here after I have been abroad? Will you keep my place here open for me just as it is now?"

He told her simply "yes." She little knew how the question moved him; she little guessed that long into the silent hours of the night he sat wrapped in silent thought, a bitter, bitter conflict going on between his love and pride.

It had come to this; just as poor James Trefusis had hoped and desired had things turned out. Basil Ross had found his heart, and given it once and for ever to his ward. He loved Ivy with a devotion which was keenest pain; it made him miserable to think a day must come when another would claim her for his own.

Basil Ross loved Ivy Trefusis as his own life, but he never dreamed of telling her so. He believed her affection for her father's memory, and her regard for himself, might win favour in a consent she would afterwards bitterly repent. Besides, he did not want to be married from gratitude or out of respect to a dead father's wishes. He did not care for Ivy's hand unless her heart went with it.

What it cost him to propose her absence no tongue could guess. He knew that from the moment she left Dolby-square there would be a blank in his life; he knew also what she in her innocence did not, that it was well-nigh impossible she could return to his house and take up the thread of their daily intercourse where it had been dropped.

He might keep her place empty; indeed, no one else could fill it; come when she would it would be waiting for her, but she was little more than a child now. She would return to him a woman, and the old easy familiar relationship could never be resumed.

He himself took her to Mrs. Talbot's the night of the ball; she wore soft floating robes of shimmering white silk, trimmed with fancy lace; she had roses and jasmine for her sole ornaments, and she looked like some fair vision of innocence and beauty.

"Your father would have been proud of you, child," breathed her guardian.

"Do I look nice?"

"You look, as you always do, beautiful!"

She blushed crimson, and not another word was exchanged until they reached Mrs. Talbot's.

"Dr. Ross," whispered Ivy, as he led her up the steps, "do you ever dance?"

"Not often."

"I wish you'd dance with me."

He smiled.

"You'll have better partners than I could be, child."

And she had the best dancers. The highest names in the room flocked to Miss Trefusis. Her card was soon full.

Dr. Ross did not linger long. He stayed about an hour and then took his leave, it being arranged the carriage should be sent later on for Ivy.

"A handsome man, your guardian, Miss Trefusis!" exclaimed a beardless baronet, whose devotion to the new beauty was painfully evident.

"Is he?"

"Didn't you ever look at him?"

"I don't think I ever thought about it."

"Ah, he's a good fellow—only one fault that I could ever discover."

"And that?"

"Surely you have found it out. No? Then he must be a more skilful deceiver than I thought for."

"What is it?—you are making me quite curious."

"He hates women," said Sir Charles Wood, simply. "I don't know the cause; perhaps some one jilted him long ago, or he may have been engaged to a girl who died, but he can't bear women. I was perfectly astonished to see him here."

"He has to endure the sight of me pretty often. I live at Dolby-square."

"Do you! Well, perhaps you'll teach him better. He has a horrid old sister. Perhaps he thinks most women are on her model. I know he told me once that the gentler sex could be divided into two classes—those who had guilty souls and those who had none at all."

"How horrid!"

"He must have been unfortunate in his experience. You, doubtless, will teach him better."

But Ivy, reflecting over the words, decided she did not wish to teach him better. He hated women, *ergo* he hated her. He had put up with her all these months for her father's sake. Now he was weary of the sacrifice, and caught at the first decent excuse for getting rid of her.

Ivy was unforgoingly angry. She told herself she hated her guardian, but yet she bitterly resented this attempt to get rid of her.

Then a sudden fear came to her and dyed her cheek.

"Can he be afraid that I shall fall in love with him? Does he imagine I wish the conditions of my father's will carried out? I will soon show him that he is mistaken—that Ivy Trefusis is too proud to bestow her affections on any man unasked."

In spite of this spirited resolve, in spite of her positive certainty that she cared nothing in the world for Basil Ross and what he thought of her, Ivy had a kind of heart-sickness, a strange weariness of everything, as she drove home that night.

Her guardian had not come for her. He was detained by a case of sudden illness, the coachman said. Miss Trefusis decided that was a mean excuse. He stayed away because he objected to her company.

"I'll show him I don't care," concluded the young lady; and, by way of keeping her resolve, she cried quietly to herself all the way home, and looked so troubled and altogether depressed that no one would have recognised her for the bright young beauty who left the old house so gleefully a few hours before.

Before she went to bed that night—or morning—Miss Trefusis indited a few lines to her aunt, saying she was shortly going on a foreign tour, and she should be very pleased to spend a week at the Crofts before she left England.

"There," declared Ivy, as she fastened up her letter, "they are sure to accept my proposal. Mrs. Talbot says she must start in a fortnight, so I shall not be here to trouble him much longer. He must see for himself that I am as anxious to go away as he is to get rid of me."

But she had a very restless, feverish night. Dr. Ross was in his consulting room before sleep visited his ward's eyes, and then it was a very fitful slumber, uneasy and disturbed, so that Ivy awoke at twelve heavy and unrefreshed.

"I'd give anything to stay up here on the sofa," thought the wilful girl, "my eyes are so big and tired, and my head aches badly; but I must go down just to show Dr. Ross I don't care what he thinks, and that if he hates women I don't mind one scrap."

But her efforts were thrown away. Lunch was laid only for two, and Miss Mehitabel, on being questioned, replied, disdaintfully—

"My dear Ivy, I have given up trying to understand Basil. When you know him a little longer you'll never be surprised at anything he does. Some lady came and fetched him away. I believe she wasn't a patient, for I specially asked."

Ivy bit her lip. She had told herself a dozen times she did not care if Dr. Ross did hate all women. His sister's words told her a little secret. She found that she should care very much, indeed, if he made one exception to his rule, and that exception were not herself.

"An old friend, I suppose?"

"I don't know. I saw them go, she was

crying bitterly, and Basil looked as if he had heard of some awful calamity."

Pleasant news that for the girl, who all unconsciously had given him her fresh young heart.

## CHAPTER V.

BASIL ROSS returned late that night, so late that Ivy had gone to bed. They did not meet the next day, Miss Mehitabel assuming her brother was detained from home on important business. Ivy thought the business, no doubt, concerned the lady who had summoned them away, and felt disdainful. Finally, the third morning after Mrs. Talbot's ball, a letter came from the Croft, eagerly accepting an offer of a visit, and promising the pony carriage should meet her at the station.

Truly times had changed. The little drudge, the overworked nursery governess was to be received as an honoured guest. Ivy put down the letter with a sigh; it dawned on the girl slowly that she had been happier in the old time than she could be now.

The sigh was still on her lips when a message came from Miss Mehitabel that her cold was too bad for her to get up, and at the same moment Dr. Ross walked in, grave, and almost stern expression on his face.

"Good morning, Ivy."

"Good morning."

She never offered him her hand; they had parted at Mrs. Talbot's party, he had not seen her since.

He looked a little surprised.

"Has anything troubled you, Ivy?"

"Nothing."

"I thought I heard you sigh as I came in!"

"You were mistaken. Oh, Dr. Ross," as they sat down to breakfast, "Aunt Lena wants me to go and stay at the Croft for a fortnight."

"And do you wish to go?"

"I mean to write an acceptance."

"How about Mrs. Talbot?"

"There will be plenty of time; she does not start before the middle of August. I could come back from the Croft in time."

"Very well."

He relaxed into silence, but the troubled, anxious look on his face went to Ivy's heart. Like many another woman she would not show her sympathy; instead, she exclaimed, pettishly,—

"Really, Dr. Ross, you might as well be a statue—you have never spoken once."

"I beg your pardon, Ivy, I have very painful thoughts. I was wondering how I should tell you of them."

The blue eyes turned to him eagerly.

"What has happened?"

"Do you remember Mrs. Chubb?"

"Perfectly. She came to me when papa died, and was very kind to me."

"She is in great trouble. Her husband is dead."

"Mr. Chubb. He was one of my guardians, was he not?"

"Yes," measuring his words as though he feared to say too much, "and his brother was another. His brother behaved very badly, Ivy, and absconded last week. The shock of discovering his evil ways was too much for Mr. Chubb; it turned his brain, and he committed suicide."

"Ivy, have you thought of the difference Mr. Chubb's death and his brother's flight makes in your future?"

"No."

"Of the three guardians appointed by your father's will I am now the only one able to act."

"Yes."

Not by word or look would she help him in his painful task.

"You remember your father's wishes?"

"I am not likely to forget them."

"I wanted to ask you if they could be carried out. You have been here some months now. You know me as I am—a plain, hard-working man. Could you be content to spend your future at my side, and let me take what care I could of you?"

"You mean would I marry you?"

"Exactly. Ivy, there are seventeen years between us, but I could make you happy if you would let me try."

He said nothing of his love, the deep, earnest affection which would last his life. He argued she must know it. He would not say aught which might induce her to marry him out of pity.

Mr. Chubb, junior, had been false to his trust, and absconded with the whole of Ivy's fortune. King's Langley Court and the pretty bijou villa were all that remained of the vast possessions left by James Trefusa.

She must never know it, that was Basil's first resolve. He would toll early and late; he would work as he had never done before, that she might live in luxury and ignore the wrong worked here.

He himself was not responsible. All the part of the guardianship dealing with pecuniary matters had devolved on the Chubbs. It was finding his ward's fortune gone, and himself liable to be branded with dishonour, that made the solicitor take his life. He could not support the shame his brother had brought on him.

Ivy would gladly have rested her golden head on Basil's shoulder and told him she desired nothing better than to pass her life at his side, but pride held her back.

"He does not love me," she thought, bitterly. "They have told him he must marry some day, and as I am amply dowered, and the child of a friend, he thinks he may as well give me the preference."

"I am waiting for my answer."

"No!"

"You are quite sure?"

"Positive. You are quite welcome to the large fortune my refusal places at your disposal. I tell you, Dr. Ross, I would rather be as poor as a servant-girl, I would prefer to toil day by day at plain needlework, to marrying without love."

He sighed.

"I am answered. You may be sure, Ivy, I will never press you on the subject again. For both our sakes it seemed best to me that the question should be set at rest, one way or the other, before you left here."

"Well, it is set at rest."

"Yes, and no thought of my disappointment need trouble you while you are at the Croft. Mrs. Talbot knows how to make time pass pleasantly, so I am sure you will enjoy your foreign tour. I hope that you will meet with every happiness!"

"You speak as if I were going for years!"

"My opinion is that you are going for years—nay, for ever!"

"How tired we shall get of travelling!"

"I mean," corrected Basil, gravely, "that before you come back you will have selected a partner for life! I need not tell you, Ivy, that as your last remaining guardian I shall give a ready consent to your marriage with anyone worthy of you, and your whole fortune will be yours as fully as though you had fulfilled your father's wishes."

To pay it would leave him poor indeed, and with a burden of debt upon his shoulders; but had it taken the last penny in his pocket or the coat off his back Basil Ross would have given both rather than Ivy should have been the loser.

"You are very anxious to get rid of me," said Ivy, bitterly. "Really I ought to feel flattered."

"Don't talk like that, Ivy. Are you going to the Croft to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, we shall not have much longer time together. Ivy, don't you think we might bury the hatchet, as the Indians phrase it, and be friends just the brief space of time that is left us together?"

He was astonished. She took his hand and pressed it to her lips, then she burst into a flood of passionate tears.

"I think I am the most hateful girl in the world."

"I don't," said Basil, gently. "You have a great deal too much feeling in reality, and you make it your favourite amusement to pretend you have none at all. That's all."

Miss Trefusa went to the Croft, and was received rapturously. Uncle, aunt, and cousin

really seemed as if they could not make enough of the heiress.

"And are you going to fulfil your father's wishes and marry Dr. Ross?" asked Mrs. Howard, a little curiously.

"Oh, not that is quite decided."

"And who refused?"

"I don't know."

"But, my dear, you ought to know; it affects your future very much!"

"I think we agreed mutually we should not suit each other. I know Dr. Ross told me when I wished to be married my whole fortune was at my disposal."

"Very generous of him."

"I don't know. He has more money than he knows what to do with."

"He is quite a young man still, and very handsome. I daresay he will marry yet. What a pity he could not come down with you. Katy is just the wife for a London physician."

But Ivy did not regret Basil's absence. If she did not want him for a husband she wanted him even less as a cousin.

Of course, they went over to the Court, not once, but many times. Ivy formed bright plans of what she should do when she was living there.

She even talked of coming down in the spring, with Miss Mehitabel as her chaperon. It came on her then like a visitation that the Court was let for two years, and the new tenants were coming down next week to take possession.

Ivy was simply furious. The home her father had fitted up for her to be at other people's orders! She went back to London very angry with her guardian.

He listened to her remonstrances gravely, and said, slowly,—

"Ivy, in this matter you must trust me to do the best I can for your interests."

"With my income it is nothing short of misery to let the Court."

(Continued on page 475.)

## A PLAIN GIRL.

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### CHAPTER XXXVIII.—(continued)

It was the head of a young man with dark hair. I had a strange, queer feeling in my eyes and throat. Could it be George? Yes it was. He turned half round as he heard my voice, and slowly stood up.

"You see he has taken us quite by surprise, after all," said his mother, beaming on him with delight. "He came just after you went out. He came by the Ravenna. We never thought of that."

I had a kind of hysterical desire to laugh at this, as if Mrs. Karalake was introducing me to George for the first time. I looked at him; we had not met for nearly two years—not since that terrible interview in that pretty little drawing-room at Sandgate. Since then, how much had happened! It all flashed through my mind in the instant, as they say one's whole life is presented to a drowning person.

George and I were now a father and mother. There was that change in our state since we had parted.

He was a soldier who had won his laurels, and made his name, not in any feather-bed fashion, but where hard knocks were being dealt and taken. I, on my part, was promoted to the very considerable status of a great heiress.

George did not look either ghastly or emaciated; he was thin and tanned, certainly, and had an older, graver, more concentrated expression. He wore his right arm in a sling. As he stood up to meet me he did not advance, but remained just in the same spot. It was for me to accost him, presumably, so I came forward and held out my hand—was not Miranda watching us!—and said,—

"I am glad to see you, George. I hope you are better," my voice shook a little.



He took my offered fingers for a moment in his left hand, and then dropped them. He did not say anything. It was not at all a reassuring reception. I felt very pale—if one can really feel such a thing—chilled to the marrow of one's bones; and I saw my reflection in an opposite mirror. My face was really the colour of my dress (white).

"We must have baby down at once, Ellen," said Mrs. Karalake, eagerly—Miranda had now left the room. "I'm dying to show him to George."

"Yes," I assented, faintly, snatching at the opportunity of making my exit. "I will go and send him down now." So saying I followed my sister-in-law's example.

I had some difficulty in keeping the tears back from my eyes as I gave the requisite message to Moss, and it was with an almost superhuman effort that I commanded my voice and tried to speak in my usual tone, as I said, entering the nursery,—

"Sir George has arrived, Moss. Take off baby's pelisse, and put on his blue gown, and take him down to the drawing-room as quickly as you can."

"Won't you take him yourself, my lady?"

But I affected not to have heard this suggestion, as I went into my own room, which was opposite, and shut and locked the door, and, throwing myself into a chair, indulged in the luxury of a thoroughly good cry.

It relieved me inexpressibly; but, half an hour later, when my long-drawn sobs were stifled, and my tears had ceased to flow, I went over to the dressing-table and looked into the glass, and what a sight was this!

My eyes sunken, with crimson rims; my face pale, but with red patches on it here and there.

I could not possibly appear in such a condition—no, not for hours! Besides, I was not wanted.

George had his mother and his sister and a new relation—his son.

I sat near the window, which was open, and watched the family party slowly strolling across the grass towards a beech under the beeches.

How angry I felt with myself for the feeling that in my heart of hearts I thought there was no one like George still. I must get all that rooted out.

I had seen in his eyes nothing but a look as rude, and as politely critical, as if I were some young lady he had beheld for the first time; and I—poor fool!—for the smallest encouragement, would have thrown my arms round his neck and kissed him, and, as far as I was concerned, by-gones would have been by-gones; but he was as hard, and as wedded to his own hateful suspicions, as ever.

"Then so be it!" I said.

Hitherto I have been the docile victim of circumstances, and my own folly, in yielding and admitting his right to try, and judge, and condemn me.

I had adopted a new rôle with Miranda, and had carried it out with success. I would play a new part with George, and see how he would like it. He should not give all the knocks that were going; and people who set out by being too humble in domestic matters would end in being treated as slaves.

I intended to appear at dinner, and to do this with any success I must get rid of my red eyes. I bathed them with cold water, and then with eau-de-Cologne; all the time, they would keep filling as I thought of how Mrs. Karalake, and not me, had had all the pleasure, all the honour, of showing off little George to his father, a pleasure and privilege that by rights was mine.

Presently Moss came and knocked at my door. I was panting to hear what she had to say, and what had been the effect of his introduction to his other parent; but then, my eyes, what tales they would tell. I must wait.

So I flung myself on my bed, and said, in a smothered voice,—

"I have a headache; I can't talk to you now, Moss."

So Moss had to go away.

By the time the second gong went at eight o'clock I joined the party in the drawing-room.

I think my face looked as usual. I had taken

great pains with my dress, which was a high, very soft, cream silk, trimmed with quantities of lace—a very pretty home dinner dress.

I was thankful I had worn it once or twice before, so that Miranda would not exclaim "that I had put on a new dress for George,"—Miranda, who knew so little, and who now would guess so much.

George took his mother in, Miranda and I followed, arm-in-arm, as if we were the most affectionate of sisters, I knowing so well the rancorous hatred she bore me.

I sat at the head, George at the foot, just as in old days at Sandgate—older, and far happier times—though then we had not these powdered servants-in-waiting, and a table laden with massive plate, and a dinner laid before us fit to tempt a prince.

Mrs. Karalake did most of the talking. Miranda, too, was unusually loquacious, and told her brother in a tone of playful command that he must fill the house, and give a lot of entertainments; that everyone expected it of him.

"We have been as dull as ditch-water the last two years."

George said he was very sorry to hear that, and he must try and improve on such a state of affairs.

Mrs. Karalake talked nervously and incessantly. She was resolved that she would not leave any awful pauses, nor give people time to notice that George and I never spoke to one another.

He did address me once *à propos* of grapes.

"May I give you some grapes?"

To this I simply bent my head. I think he looked a little surprised at the calm dignity of my assent. When the servants had retired Mrs. Karalake said,—

"He is charmed with little George, Ellen," speaking as if she was a kind of interpreter. "He had no idea that he was not in long clothes. Of course he has no experience. He says he is big enough for a pony."

I made no reply whatever. I did not even look up, which, I suppose, was rude, but went on pretending to eat my grapes.

After one or two long gaps between George's account of his passage home and a few details of the war we got up, and fled out one by one.

Whilst he held the door open with his left arm he looked at me hard. I could feel it, but I kept my head studiously turned away. What the evening was like I know not, for I did not appear.

The next day we had a solemn breakfast. My silence was oppressive: I did not speak to anyone excepting little George, who came in, and toddled round the table, and seemed to be very much taken with his father.

Mrs. Karalake did say a few words to me and I to her, but she was absorbed in her son, in cutting up his meat, and being a real mother to him; and Miranda was buried in her thoughts, and was unusually silent.

I think, perhaps, George regretted his reception of me a little, and was disposed to hold out the tip of his sceptre, for he spoke to me in a general way once or twice; but I affected not to take the remark to myself, and made no replies.

After dinner I again escaped, and, as it was a very hot evening, I went out into the grounds.

It was a lovely warm summer night, the air was delicious, and loaded with the perfume of syringa—no wrap necessary.

I wandered about, not feeling very exhilarated, all the same; sniffing roses, and burying my face in stalks of sweet pea, and asking myself how it was all going to end, and would it not be best to go away to my own house in Park-lane, and have my cousin Maggie over to stay with me?

I went and sat on a garden bench and thought this matter over. I was no longer a black sheep at the castle, for my father had not only written to but actually seen uncle before he crossed the Atlantic.

Yes, I really thought that my plan would be the best, and far the pleasantest for all parties.

What was the use of pretending this life? Besides, I was not now dependent. At this moment my thoughts were interrupted by a voice behind me saying,—

"Are you not afraid of catching cold?"

It was George—George who, strolling alone over the tennis-ground behind me, cigar in mouth, had accidentally discovered my retreat.

He came round the seat and looked at me and I at him. He sat down at the other corner, and I immediately rose to depart.

"Don't go," he said; "I've something to say to you," coolly knocking the ashes off his cigar as he spoke.

I stayed, but I said nothing.

"You know we can't go on like this," impressively.

I bowed my head very gravely. I knew that he did not like my silent mode of assent.

"We can't go on, you know, sitting at our own table like two dummies. Of course it's a bore; but we must study the servants."

"Study the servants!" I exclaimed at last, and I laughed with irrepressible mockery.

"You know what I am thinking of—appearances," he said, angrily.

This mocking laugh of mine had touched him acutely.

"We must keep up appearances for the sake of the family name."

"Bother the family name!" I cried contemptuously, sitting down as I spoke; "you mean your own good name and the child's."

"My own good name! Thank you very much, for your anxiety is in very good taste. No one ever threw a slur on it but yourself; and as to the child, I fancy his good name is not in any present danger. Ellen," he said, and there was a sudden light in his eyes, "can you—dare you jest at such a thing as the secret that lies between us—that has parted our lives?"

"Do you believe in it still?" I asked, now standing up and looking towards him with dilated eyes and trembling lips.

"I've seen nothing to alter the case," he said; "no, nothing. When I looked back memory—the memory of one day is too ghostly a companion."

"I was a foolish little goose in those days," I said, folding my arms and surveying him. "I was afraid of you then; I am not now, and I am glad to have an opportunity of saying so!"

I paused and looked at him with a smile, and he gazed back at me with an expression of angry astonishment, and threw away his unfinished cigar.

"Please listen to what I am going to say," I went on. "It is my turn this time. I was so unhinged then by the failure of my plot, by my awful interview with that wretched man, and the still worse one with you, that my very wits left me."

"I could not find presence of mind to defend myself. I should have brought my father, and made him tell you all, but instead I sank down restless, crushed."

"I gave in, and accepted your verdict as if I were really guilty. This was most unfair to myself, I now see."

"For a long time I lived like some wretched creature doing penance in your mother's house."

"I gave up all my friends—everything," opening my hands as I spoke; "but there is an end of that. I am rich, I am my very own mistress; I have tolerated your tyranny too long."

"I stayed here to receive you, to please your mother; but the reception you accorded me scarcely repaid my delay. I shall put off my journey no longer. I shall go away to my own house, and leave you to reign undisputed in yours."

"Why should we trouble to throw dust in the eyes of the world? The discomfort to ourselves is not worth it."

I paused and made my query in a tone of curt decision.

"Ellen, this is all nonsense. You are talking as if you were not married to me at all—as if you could go and come as you pleased," staring at the startling phenomena of a wife broken loose.

"So I can," I interrupted; "and as to my being married to you, we have sundered that bond by mutual consent—you on your part two years ago, I on mine now."

"Nevertheless, you are still my wife in the

eyes of the world, and I shall hold you to that outward form," he replied, with increased irritation.

"For what reason?" I asked, with a sneer. "My fortune!"

"No. Spare your gibes; you don't believe in them yourself; this bandying of bitter speeches is bad. This, even on the ground of common politeness, is no way for you to speak to me, nor I to you. The real reason is, as you may guess, the child."

"Really!" shrugging my shoulders. "It certainly never would have struck me that you took such an interest in him hitherto."

"I often heard of him from my mother," he began.

"And no doubt cursed the day that he was born!" I interrupted.

"Ellen!" in a tone of angry reproach.

"Don't call me Ellen, please; I hate the name. If you must call me something call me Lady Karalake. But, pray, do not be anxious about the child. I am a better mother than you might think. I shall take him to town with me."

"No, no, you will not!" with stern decision.

"The idea of taking a child to London now! Why, even I know that that would not be fit for him. You, I suppose you don't care to leave him behind! In fact, I think, for the present, you had far better stay. I shall fill the house for the shooting in August. You might ask over your cousin Maggie."

"Why?" I inquired, sharply; "to see the agreeable domestic picture?"

"No. In fact, there's no harm in telling you Jarvis is coming; and, besides being a great friend of mine, he is a great friend of hers. In fact—in short—he is hesitating and floundering about."

"In fact—in short, you want to give a lame dog a lift over a stile, to 'make the match,' as they call it in Ireland; but, at the same time, I should have fancied that you would have been the last to lend yourself to such nonsense as love and marriage."

"Nonsense?"

"Yes; it comes to the same thing in the end. Look at us," pointing my finger to him and then to myself. "Were we not in love, and did we not get married? Observe us now! How we detest and despise each other! Why decoy other people into the same plight?"

"Detest—despise! These are strong words. I'm not aware that I have ever given you reason to detest, much less despise me; but I'd rather, if I may have my choice, have a double dose of the former than any of the latter."

"I could see that, much as he might like to despise me, I was not to think meanly of him. The idea stung him sharply."

"I have good reason for what I say. Did you not desert me? Have you noticed me for two long years, not even when the child was born? And there are other things."

I paused.

"The dew is falling heavily, and you really must go in; but before you go I want to come to an understanding with you. As long as you are here, for your sake and my sake, let it be a truce. I mean let us conduct ourselves as if we were like other people. Do not let it be said, now that I have just come home from the wars, that Sir George and Lady Karalake lead a cat-and-dog life. I am all for peace. I don't care for domestic campaigns."

"Peace at any price! Don't you think that our truce, such as you would have it, savours of hypocrisy? Will it not be better and honestest each to go our own way and not speak?"

"No, I don't think so; the speech will be a relief to your feelings. Sometimes, you know," with a strange smile, "you can despise and detest me all the same. Now let us go in."

"What, together?"

"Yes, why not?"

"I suppose it is one of the duties we owe the servants," I said; "but I accept your truce," walking beside him across the grass. "It will be better than sitting in sulky silence. London is too hot just now," and then, speaking as if to an acquaintance, "Do you not feel the

country a nice, cool, green relief after India—horrible hot India?"

"Yes, but India is not horrible to me. I like it. I would go back to-morrow if I could," looking straight before him. What a nice profile he had!

"Why!" I asked, with assumed indifference.

"Because the fighting is not half over yet, and it's very hard here on me to be invalided with this confounded arm of mine. After a campaign I don't feel as if I could stand the dull monotony of common life. I like to hear the roar of cannon and the charging of squadrons."

I stared at George as he said this. There was a look of suppressed enthusiasm on his face, though half turned away, that made me for the first time understand why he had been called a hero, a brilliant cavalry soldier, who did not scruple to carry his life in his hand.

"And have you no other reason for wishing to return to India, say to-morrow?" I proceeded in an insinuating voice.

He hesitated for a moment, and then said,—

"I have many friends."

I felt a desperate desire to say something that would surprise him, and as we slowly walked up the marble steps from the pleasure ground I made up my mind as to what I would say.

"Yes," pausing at the top, and looking at him with a smile (a forced smile, of course), "I am sure you have many friends, and one among them who is a host in herself. Do you not wish that you might return to-morrow to Mrs. Thorn?"

I fancy that my remark was an illumination for him. He changed countenance visibly. "Ah, ah!" I said to myself, I had scored this time.

"You see, my dear George," I whispered, ere I left him, "that, at any rate, I have a Roland for your Oliver. All the same, we will keep our truce."

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN I had launched my missile recorded in the end of the last chapter I fled precipitately, and did not reappear till breakfast time next morning.

George and I now talked across the table to one another—rather distant, timid kind of conversation—but it was sufficient for Miranda, and ten times better than dead silence.

I could see that he was very anxious to have a few words with me alone, but I skillfully evaded all *tête-à-têtes* in a manner that I have no doubt exasperated him; but one morning, being the earliest in the breakfast-room and I next, I was fairly caught. He was reading the paper as I came in, and quickly putting it down, and with a nervous look to make sure that we were alone, he said in a would-be off-handed manner,—

"By-the-way, I particularly wished to ask you what you meant the other night about a lady you named, Mrs. Thorn?"

"I meant what I implied," I returned, taking up my letters quite coolly, "that you were very fond of her; in fact, are, by all accounts."

"Ellen, take care what you say," growing visibly paler.

"Oh," carelessly, "I know very well what I am talking about; and do, for mercy sake, remember that I detest the name of Ellen."

"I won't have this trifling," he said, throwing down the paper, which he had still held in his left hand. "What do you mean by talking of a Roland for an Oliver? What do you dare to insinuate about Mrs. Thorn?"

"Pooh!" I cried, stepping back a pace. "Pray don't lose your temper over it. Do not imagine that I am jealous (this was a wicked lie on my part), or that I am going to play Eleanor to her Roland, but I should just like you to know that I am quite aware of your little peccadilloes."

"You are driving me stark staring mad! Oblige me by stating what you have heard, what vile station gossip has filtered to your ears."

"No more to mine than to every woman's in the Presidency. Two people volunteered to inform me that you and the lady were the—shall we say—the amusement of Murrel?"

"And you believed them?" he demanded, fiercely.

"Certainly," with a shrug. "Why not? You believed worse things of me."

"But then I had the testimony of my own eyes."

"And I have had the advantage of other people's; but it is not of much consequence, considering the terms on which we live—perfect mutual freedom. I select my friends, you yours. Is not that correct?"

"Mrs. Thorn certainly was a friend of mine," he began, slowly, "and I would have thought that the great kindness she showed to me when I was so ill would have given her a claim on you."

"On me!" with a gesture of repudiation. "Oh, dear, no! That has nothing to do with me now."

I was acting abominably; but I was resolved to be merciless, and let him taste a little of what had been my portion for so long.

His face fell as I made this remark. He was hurt, I could see; but why should he hug himself with the idea that I was fond of him still? I certainly would not give him that comfort.

"She was very unhappy in her home, and I pitied her."

"Oh, of course! We all know what pity precedes."

"One would never know you again—you are so hard, so bitter and so cynical," he exclaimed, in a tone of angry amusement.

"Probably not; but I think the change is for the better. She is pretty, is she not? And a great flirt, and likes the cavalry!"

"I shall tell you nothing about her, excepting that she is no more to me than that tea-tray, and I consider your remarks an insult to me and to yourself."

"Oh, that's nonsense! But that is how a man always finishes up an argument—getting into a rage."

Here the door opened, and little George was, as it were, set down, and let loose in the room. Big George's snow vanished as the small mite toddled up to him, and tried to climb up on his knee; but George was unused to children, and, besides, he had only the use of his left arm; so after a futile endeavour, which ended in his sling being pulled over his head, he gave up the attempt.

I stood looking on in silence, and then I had compunction. I had had the best of the late battle, and I came over, and I'm sure very much to George's surprise, stooped down and picked up the black silk sling, and put it over his head.

His arm I could see was quite useless, far worse than I had had any idea of. I did this as gently and as deftly as I could, and then I lifted up the child and placed him on his knee, little George making another eager grab at the wounded arm, which had greatly attracted his attention.

"You must not touch that, George," I said, shaking my head gravely. "Is it very painful?" to his father.

"No, not very. A splintered forearm—a bullet."

"And the wound in your head!" looking critically at his thick dark locks.

"Never mind my scars. I wonder if the mater is aware that it's nearly ten o'clock. We may as well begin."

"I suppose so," feeling rebuffed, and perhaps deservedly so, and now moving away to my place opposite the tea-tray just as Mrs. Karalake, with many apologies, came into the room.

Miranda followed ten minutes later without the slightest excuse, for Miranda had a rooted idea that we should never commence any meal till it was her sovereign convenience to be present.

George's arm was very painful in spite of his disclaimer, and it was decided that he and his mother should go to town for a few days, leaving Miranda *tête-à-tête* with me; but not for long, for the day after their departure I had the great



pleasure of meeting my dear Maggie at Aldridge Station.

How I laughed and wept over her as I took her home in the brougham, and how ceaselessly we did talk, and how much we had to say!

She was immensely struck with Karalake as it came in view, and also with the heir of that ilk, whom we picked up as he was walking with Moss in the avenue.

"You ought to be a happy girl if ever there was one, Nell!" she said, as she sat down in my luxurious bedroom before the glass, and I had the handling once more of her thick tresses as in days of yore.

"Yes, I ought to be," I replied, evasively.

"I know," she went on, looking at my face, which was visible over hers in the big mirror, "that you and George had a little difference once, and papa was not pleased with you, and very angry when he found out where the piano, and books, and pony-carriage came from, but he has quite got over that; indeed, he thinks more of you than ever, and so he ought. You have been so good to us, darling—"

"Not half as good as I would like to be if you would let me," I interrupted.

"Oh! Nellie, we really are ashamed as it is; and about George, how glad you must have been to have him back, and so distinguished, too! Is he as good-looking as ever?"

"You will see for yourself; he comes home on Saturday."

"I suppose, Nell," looking at me rather anxiously, "that all married people have their little storms in teacup?"

"I suppose so," I returned, rather grimly (storm in a teacup, indeed!)

"Oh! mercy," she screamed, "you are dragging my hair out by the roots. What are you thinking of, Nell!"

"I'm sure I'm awfully sorry; it was quite unintentional, and as a salve to your poor head I'm going to tell you some nice news. Who do you think is coming here on Friday, and you and I will have to entertain him all alone!"

She guessed at once, for she blushed rosy red up to the very roots of the hair that I was so tastefully arranging.

"Not Captain Jarvis!" half doubtfully.

"Why not Captain Jarvis—don't you like him?"

"Yes, oh, yes; he is very nice. Don't you?"

I assented most promptly; but, query, did he like me? What did he think of me? He had been with George on that most fatal evening, and he had seen me stealing down those hateful stairs. Surely my evil genius had alone tempted me to ascend them.

"A Colonel Moore is coming too. He is for Miranda; that is to say," correcting myself, "he is asked for the shooting, and because he is an old friend of George's, and Miranda likes him; but if he marries her, and thus relieves me of her society, I shall pity him from my heart, and be his sympathetic friend for life."

"You don't like her!" she asked, in an awe-struck voice.

"No, my dear, I don't. Oh, your poor hair. A thousand pardons. There now, get up; you look lovely."

"Ah, Nellie, you know you are only giving me a bit of the blarney. I never was more than nice-looking, and only that when I'm really well dressed. Now you—you—really are even prettier than ever," kissing me enthusiastically.

"Looks count for nothing once one is married," I said, lightly.

"Oh! Nellie, you know you don't think so; George does not think so. How proud he was of you at Sandgate that summer."

"Proud of me. Oh, very," with hidden meaning.

"And I'm sure," she proceeded, innocently, "he thinks there is no one in Great Britain can hold a candle to you in the way of looks, and that there is no one so nice in all the world."

"Perhaps," I said, undoing my own long hair, preparatory to twisting it up; "and now let us talk of someone else. Tell me some more about Jane and Mary."

## CHAPTER XL.

ON Monday George and his mother returned, and found that our circle had been increased by Captain Jarvis and Maggie.

I felt rather uncomfortable about meeting the former, but he soon put me at my ease; he had evidently erased the last time we had met from the tablets of his memory, and was as friendly and pleasant in his manners as in those old days when he came over with George to pick gooseberries at the Castle.

George was all the better for his trip to town. He returned looking much improved, and talked of soon dispensing with his sling; but I could see that my mother-in-law had something on her mind.

I was now thoroughly well versed in every expression of her rather cast-iron countenance.

"He will be having more company by the middle of the week, you know, my dear," she began, when we four ladies were *tea à la carte* after dinner. "Colonel Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Travers, and Mrs. Thorn," bringing out the last name with an effort. "Come out and walk on the terrace this lovely evening, and we will decide where they are all to be put."

I made no reply. I had been too much astounded to speak, but I followed my mother-in-law through the French window with considerable alacrity. This information required an explanation. I was to have it at once.

"You see, my dear," laying her bony hand on my arm, "Mrs. Thorn may be a little fast, but you and I know that she has been wonderfully kind to George, nursing him as if he were her brother, and we cannot have the obligations all on one side, can we? George and I met her in the street, and she was so surprised and pleased to see him looking almost quite himself, and very glad, apparently, to meet me. She came home with us to lunch, and after lunch she sat with me, and, and was very nice and confidential, I assure you. I was quite taken with her for herself, and very sorry for her. She has been obliged to come home on account of ill-health, and is staying with her husband's people. She has no near relatives of her own, and she is miserable. They are so uncongenial! Poor thing! she cried bitterly, and told me how dreadful it was to her to be separated from her husband, but her health would not permit her to stand another hot season in India; and to make a long story short, I asked her down here on a visit, and she is coming on Thursday," concluding very rapidly, and casting an anxious look at me.

"And what does George say?" I asked, after a long pause.

"Strange to relate, Ellen, George was not at all so eager to return her good offices as I would have expected. He seems to have got some ridiculous idea into his head. He imagines that you won't be at all pleased to see her here. Did you ever hear of such an absurd notion! I told him you had no littleness of that kind in your disposition, and had given me *carte blanche* about asking people to the house—exactly as if it were my own."

"Of course," I assented, relieved to find that it was merely on a point of etiquette that she was uneasy. "Do not hesitate to ask whoever you please."

"I knew George's scruples were idiotic. We must go in. I see the men looking for their coffee, but I wanted to explain it all, and really George made me feel quite uncomfortable about you."

"I suppose my mother has told you who is coming here on Thursday?" said George, speaking in a rather low voice, as he sat down on a low chair near me, with his coffee cup in his left hand.

"Yes," I answered, "Mrs. Thorn. Of course your mother acted quite properly, in one sense. Of course she did not know."

I paused, and glanced at him expressively.

"There was and is nothing to know!" he replied, meeting my look with an angry flash in his eye like tropical lightning; "but of course," with suppressed fury in his voice, "you equally measure me by your own standard."

We were speaking in a low tone, and probably the lookers on thought that in the rather dim light, for it was nearly ten o'clock, we were whispering soft nothings to each other, instead of carrying on a fierce though cautious battle.

"You will at least be civil to her," imperiously.

"Oh, yes. Do not be afraid that I shall forget my manners. I will be all that even you could wish."

This remark of mine irritated him intensely. His cup rattled in its saucer, so much did his hand tremble, and a good share of coffee went over the carpet.

I laughed at the little accident, and said, with stinging emphasis,—

"A guilty conscience!"

I believe that my companion so far forgot himself and his manners as to mutter a malediction of some kind under his moustache, got up abruptly, put his untouched coffee on the nearest table, and walking out of the room, did not return that evening.

He did not speak to me, beyond the merest monosyllables, for two days. Our attitude towards each other was painfully artificial.

Thursday afternoon came, and with it Mrs. Thorn. My mother-in-law met her with the brougham, and conveyed her back to tea. "Good eyes and a thundering good figure!"

Yes, this was an accurate description of the lady whom I advanced to meet.

We were all sitting out under the trees when she arrived, and Mrs. Karalake brought her at once to the rendezvous.

She was exquisitely dressed in a very quiet, but expensive style. As I glanced over her *tout ensemble* as she swam across the grass I said to myself,—

"Dr. Thorn must have a long purse."

She had a very low voice and a soothing, soft, caressing manner, and, seated beside me, put forth her far-famed charms, but, all the same, our acquaintance advanced in a halting, monosyllabic fashion.

To her raptures over "Karalake" and over little George I gave but a chilling recognition, and yet I did make a strong mental effort to be civil to this soft-tongued, large-eyed stranger, knowing well that George was watching me—George, whose pose under the circumstance was admirable.

He welcomed Mrs. Thorn as he would have welcomed Maggie or Janie, but there was nothing more *empressé* than he would have infused into his greeting with a sister or cousin—nothing tender in his manner; but, then, I was present!

Our house was now tolerably full, and I did not feel my position quite so irksome. There were plenty of other people to act as nice social buffers between George and me, and the days were filled with tennis-parties, riding-parties, shooting-parties; and the evenings were given up to round games and music.

On the whole, the visits were going off well. We had had one large dinner-party, one huge tennis-party, and the weather had favoured us at the latter.

Half the country was present. There was a ladies' tennis tournament, competed for by four young ladies, and won by Maggie; the prize was a gold bangle.

Mrs. Sharp ran her very hard for the trophy, and did not conceal her disappointment and rage at not getting it.

Mrs. Sharp's eyes spoke volumes to me as Mrs. Thorn, but her tongue was prudently silent, and I courageously braced it out, and let her run away with the idea that the lady was my own special guest, bidden at my own special desire, and I really began to think that what I had heard was scandal, and was rather inclined to give her the benefit of the doubt.

Her deportment was perfect, and, so far from being a flirt, she seemed to prefer the society of her own sex.

Her toilettes were superb, and won the respect and admiration of all the ladies; and, as I beheld one more *recherché* costume dooned after another, I repeated to myself as before,—

"What a long purse Dr. Thorn must have!"



MRS THORN AND CAPTAIN KARSLAKE WERE EVIDENTLY DEEP IN SOME VERY IMPORTANT TOPIC.

Her evening dresses were half-covered with the most costly lace—lace that would have become a duchess.

Her ornaments included diamonds, sapphires, and rubies, and by no means small, cheap stones! Her taste was perfect; and, as I have said before, her manners surprisingly quiet and refined.

I began to feel that she was a much maligned woman. Yes, I was not altogether ungenerous.

George, I began to think, was beginning to take a more lenient view of me. At first I thought it was imagination, but, as I watched, I saw that my perceptions had not misled me.

More than once he came and, as it were, dropped into a chair near mine in an unpremeditated fashion. He would listen to what I was saying, and join in the conversation himself.

This was not in the bond—the truce. His other duties, such as carrying my shawl, or parasol, sitting next to me in church, and handing me in and out of my carriage, were all very well and proper, but this was something extra.

But all this was the proverbial calm before the storm—a calm wherein Captain Jarvis and Maggie enjoyed a great deal of one another's society, wherein everyone but George played tennis, and everyone rode except myself.

Mrs. Thorn was an admirable rider—as was Maggie; Miranda very fair. Both Mrs. Travers and I often regretted, as I watched the large party away from the hall-door, that we did not shine in the saddle, too.

I had watched them depart publicly, and watched them return surreptitiously, but I had never once seen George riding at Mrs. Thorn's bridle hand; perhaps she was as cunning as I was!

One evening after dinner we ladies went out into the grounds as usual, and rambled about in couples.

Maggie had something important to say to me, and I had guessed it ever since she had run past me in the hall that afternoon with an unusually sad face.

Captain Jervis had proposed for her, and laid his heart, and his pay, and his prospects at her feet. She was the happiest girl in England.

Of course I kissed and hugged her, and congratulated her with all my heart.

"We won't be rich—nothing like you and George; in fact, rather poor than otherwise; but money is not everything."

"No, indeed; you may well say that," I returned, with a sigh, as I thought of all my wealth and how little happiness I had for all my thousands.

We were standing in the door of a little rustic summer-house, which was at the end of a very long, shady walk.

Just now at the entrance to that walk there appeared two figures. We could not distinguish them at first, and I said, on the spur of the moment,—

"They look like lovers!"

But ere I had finished my sentence I recognised them for Mrs. Thorn and George. They did not come up the walk, but stood talking very impressively in the entrance or archway made by bushes, and were evidently deep in some very important topic.

Her gesticulations were eloquent. Her hands and her head came into action, and presently so did her pocket-handkerchief. She began to cry, to use that ever-powerful weapon against the other sex.

George had hitherto been saying "No!" very steadily—I could guess that; and even when she laid her hand on his arm he had not been moved. Of course that was all dumb show to us, but our active minds filled in the picture.

It was a very pretty picture—the two figures in the green archway—both young and graceful. They might have been drawn as an illustration of "Love's Young Dream," or any other nice title for a pair of handsome, well-posed lovers!

Yes, in the abstract it was a pretty tableau, but not a tableau that pleased me. The woman was crying—was begging for something—and George was now all respectful sympathy.

It was mean to stay and watch them; and any way, I could not bear it, so not looking at Maggie, and speaking with as much indifference as I could, I said,—

"Come along, you shall tell me all—a great deal more—in my own room when everyone has gone to bed, and we won't be interrupted," and, so saying, I boldly marched out of the summer-house and down the pathway.

Our sudden appearance was a great surprise to the other pair, but they had ample time to recover as we came up to them. Mrs. Thorn was now pretending to blow her nose, and George was endeavouring to look quite unconscious.

"I think you had better come in, Mrs. Thorn," I said to her sweetly. "It is getting quite damp. The dew is falling, and I am sorry to see you have such a cold in your head."

As to George I said nothing, but I darted a glance at him that told him quite plainly that I had seen all. Mrs. Thorn, muttering something incoherent about "dampgrass," obediently accompanied me indoors. She was rather depressed for the remainder of the evening, and attached herself to my mother-in-law.

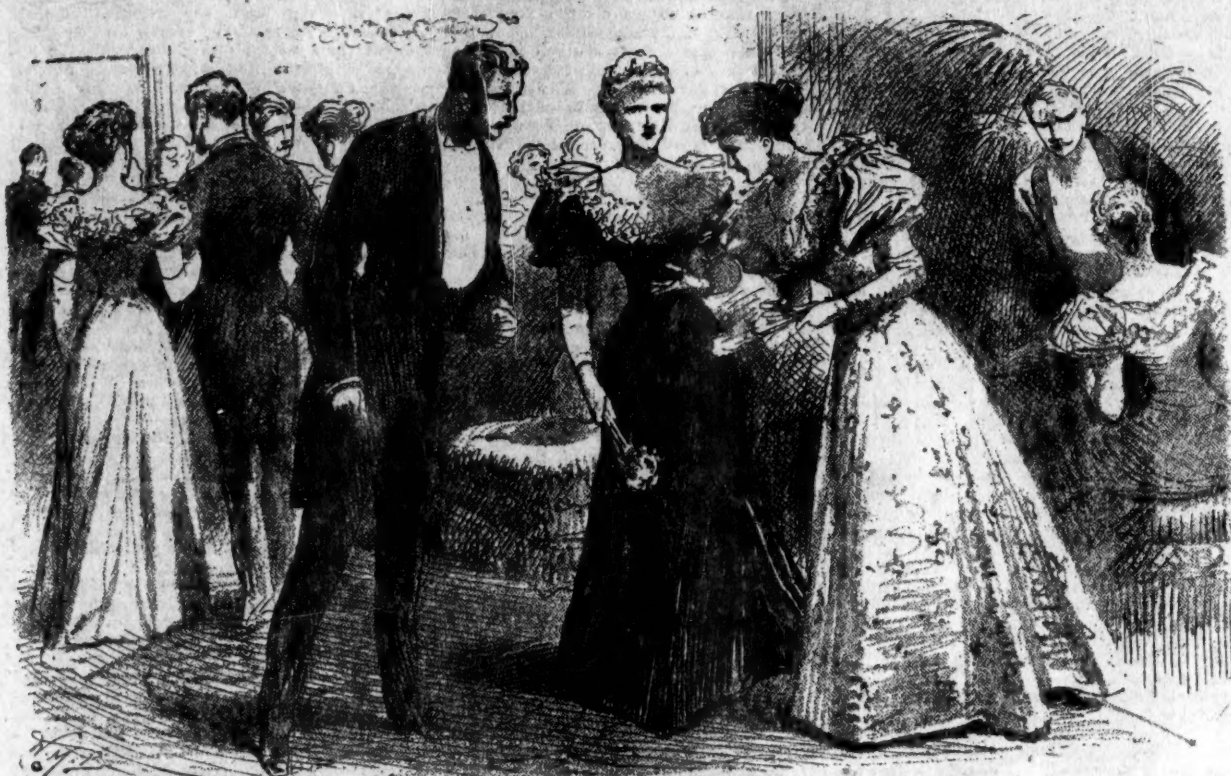
As for George I never once condescended to look at him. I avoided glancing in his direction pointedly and ostentatiously, although we made two of the party, who were playing a very exciting round game.

My spirits were unusually high to a looker-on, and he was unusually silent, and played in an abstracted fashion, as if his mind was occupied with something else, and that something was not of a very pleasant description.

(To be continued.)

AN anemone two feet in diameter in the China Sea shelters in its stomach a little fish, that, when danger threatens, rushes into its living home, which closes its tentacles above it like a door.





LADY KINGSLEY INTRODUCED RONALD TO THE YOUNG LADY HE WAS TO TAKE INTO DINNER.

## LORD KINGSLEY'S HEIR.

—301—

## CHAPTER XV.

In all Ronald Thorndale's anticipations of the future, in all his troubled fears of his reception by his new-found relations, one bright picture stood out prominently in the gloom—the face of Lady Viola Orme, and the memory of her sweet voice.

Ronald had only seen her once. He had spoken to her for the space of a minute, and yet he had contrived to lose his heart to her, and to love her with every fibre of his being.

It was that one afternoon at the Academy, that one chance meeting with Viola, which was the turning point in his life. His secret, almost hopeless love, fired his ambition, and made him resolve, even if it were the work of a lifetime, to gain access to the charmed regions of society, where she moved as queen.

To this end he had thankfully accepted Mr. Grey's situation, feeling that it was the first ring on the ladder of success.

When he discovered that Lady Viola was his employer's godchild, and that Mr. Grey was closely connected with her family, he felt that he should surely see her again, and when, not so very long after, counting by weeks and months, he found that he was the nephew of the man Viola also called uncle, that he would, as it were, be thrown into daily constant intercourse with her, his heart beat wildly.

He knew that Lord and Lady Kingsley might dislike him as Will's supplanter, that their guests might look down on him as one brought up in a different sphere; but he felt certain of Viola's sympathy. He felt sure that the girl who had not disdained to speak kindly to a shabby stranger who had rendered her a trifling service would have a kindly welcome for the lonely man, who, through no fault of his own, had grown up a stranger to his kindred.

It was a painfully silent drive.

Ronald would have liked to talk to the groom

of local subjects, but feared it would be thought familiar if he began the conversation. Andrew, who for his part (in common with the rest of the household) fairly detested William Thorndale, would gladly have made some speech of welcome to the new comer, only his rustic shyness held him back.

"It was no use," he explained later in the servants' hall, "telling Mr. Thorndale we were all main glad to see him here, when I knew quite well his uncle and aunt were nothing of the kind. One couldn't praise up the Abbey and that to him, seeing it was a sort of reminder that he knew less about the place he must be master of than his own servants."

But when, after a long drive, they reached the lodge gates, and the dog cart turned in, the new heir found his voice, and asked quietly,—

"Are there many people staying at the Abbey?"

"There's a tidy few, sir, for the shooting. Lady Ashlyn and her daughter, Lady Viola, are here for a long stay. My mistress is not strong, and the Countess helps her with the visitors."

"And my cousin, I mean Mr. William Thorndale, is there?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. William mostly lives with his uncle; he's no other home you see."

No; in one respect Will's fate and his own were strangely alike, Ronald thought. Both had lost their father in early childhood, and in each case the mother had married again. True, Will's mother had not long survived her second husband; but it came to the same thing, both of the cousins were dependent on their uncle.

A swift, sharp turn of the drive, and they came suddenly in sight of the Abbey.

Andrew drew up under the porticoed entrance, and Mr. Thorndale sprang to the ground. The door stood open, and a stream of light shone invitingly from within; the butler came forward.

"Welcome home, sir!" he said, simply; "will you come this way please, Mr. Thorndale?"

Then his uncle meant to receive him in the

midst of his guests without one word of private welcome.

It was not quite so bad as Ronald feared. Before he reached the drawing-room door Lord Kingsley appeared and the butler fell back.

"I hope you had a pleasant journey, Ronald!" and the Marquis put out his hand.

The greeting was no warmer—perhaps, indeed, a shade less cold—than that he had bestowed in the summer on Mr. Grey's secretary; but Ronald gave no sign of disappointment. He took the offered hand, and remarked it was a long journey. His pride equalled his uncle's, and he could be quite as cold as Lord Kingsley.

"I am sorry I could not meet you," said the Marquis; "would you like to see your rooms, or will you come and be introduced to your aunt and cousin?"

He spoke the last words with an evident effort. On the whole he seemed more embarrassed than his nephew.

"I would prefer to see Lady Kingsley."

Again the Marquis hesitated.

"You must not mind if my wife seems a little cold. This business has been a sad blow to her. You see William Thorndale has been like a son to us all these years."

"I expect no welcome," said Ronald, coldly. "If I had had my own way, Lord Kingsley, I should not be here at all. I would rather have remained Mr. Grey's secretary than be your guest on sufferance."

The Marquis seemed touched, and spoke in a different tone.

"You must not think you are that. I—I loved my brother John very dearly, and for his sake I feel a great interest in you; but it is a little sudden to find we have all been mistaken for twenty years."

He flung open the drawing-room door. Most of the guests had obeyed the summons of the dressing-room, but four or five persons still lingered over the fire.

"My dear," said the Marquis to his wife, "this

is my nephew, Ronald. I am sure you will welcome him to the Abbey."

Ronald thought of his mother. The gentle-faced woman who did all her own house-work, and was the patient slave of Silas Thorn; truly her lot was a different one from that of this delicate, graceful woman before him, and yet the law called them sisters.

Lady Kingsley shook hands with Ronald, and hoped he had not had a cold journey; but her words had no heart in them, and the stranger was relieved when another lady whom he recognised at once as Viola's mother turned to him.

"This is a very difficult business for us all, Mr. Thorndale, but none of us are to blame that you are a stranger to your father's home. I hope you will soon feel that you are among your own people, and will look on me as a friend."

He thanked her warmly, and then an elderly man came forward with a beaming face.

"I was your father's greatest friend. I saw your mother married, and if I hadn't been in a distant colony for over twenty years things would have gone very differently with you, young man. You have your father's face. I only hope you have his mind and soul."

The last member of the little group had not spoken, the very sight of her had made Ronald's heart beat madly, for he recognised Lady Viola Orme, and longed for a kindly word from her. It came not. When the Marquis introduced Ronald to his niece she bowed with distant courtesy, and later, as Ronald left the room with his uncle, he distinctly heard her say,

"Oh, yes. I daresay he is wonderfully presentable considering; but he is not of our world. He is just an intelligent young man educated at a Board School, and trying to be genteel. I daresay he has a handbook of etiquette in his pocket."

Every word was audible to poor Ronald; but he followed his uncle in perfect silence to the two pleasant rooms which had been prepared as bed-chamber and study for Lord Kingsley's heir.

"Grey said you were fond of reading," observed the Marquis. "It would not be a bad plan to get our curate to come over two or three times a week and coach you up in Latin, and—that sort of thing. And now I'll leave you. Dinner is at eight; you'll hear the gong."

Ronald was thankful to the Marquis for not telling him that evening attire was indispensable, and inquiring if he possessed a dress suit. He was sure Lord Kingsley felt anxious on the subject.

If he had been handsome in the old days at Ramdon-road Ronald was more so now. The months of travel, of freedom from anxiety, and of pleasant familiar intercourse with a man of talent had done much for him. He was not so painfully thin; the old haunting expression of uneasiness had faded from his face. He had acquired a repose of manner and a quiet self-possession he had never owned in the days when he believed himself the son of Silas Thorn.

Ronald dressed almost mechanically. He was well-nigh incapable of feeling; all his sensibilities felt numbed. He was conscious he was regarded as an interloper. He was vaguely indignant that it should be so; but after Lady Viola Orme's frigid reception in the drawing-room he felt almost as though nothing mattered any more.

As the Marquis had foretold, Ronald heard the gong, and found his way to the drawing-room without much difficulty. Will Thorndale was standing in the doorway. He turned to greet his kinsman with outstretched hand.

"Welcome home," he said, quietly. "I hope you'll soon get to love the dear old Abbey as much as I do."

Reply was impossible, for Lady Kingsley was already marshalling her guests. With a frigid motion of her head she summoned Ronald to her side, and introduced him to the young lady he was to take in to dinner.

"Miss Maitland, Mr. Thorndale." The last name cost her an effort. She felt as if she were giving away something that belonged to Will to his enemy.

Jessy Maitland had that delightful gift of tact which smooths so many difficulties; she was, too, a frank, kindly-natured girl, with a genuine desire to please whoever she was thrown with. The Marchioness could hardly have made a better choice of partner for Ronald, though, in reality, she had selected Jessy because she knew the girl was too good-natured to amuse her acquaintance with an account of the gauche and blunders of the new heir of Kingsley.

It was such a numerous party that general conversation was difficult, and people for the most part contented themselves with their immediate neighbours. Ronald wondered what he had better talk about, but Jessy obligingly saved him the trouble by starting a subject herself.

"Do you know, Mr. Thorndale, we have all been very curious to see you! Your romantic story has been our chief topic for days. Don't be offended; it's better to make a plunge and get really acquainted than just to talk about nothing in monosyllables."

"I am afraid your curiosity will be disappointed, Miss Maitland."

She shook her head.

"You are just like one of the old family pictures in the gallery here. You must not think me impertinent but I have known the Abbey people all my life. Lady Kingsley was my godmother, and I was called Jessy after her."

"I did not know my aunt's name."

The girl's tone grew kinder.

"I expect there are a good many things you don't know about the family. Now, Mr. Thorndale, I am quite up to date in their history, and I am ready to be a dictionary of information for your benefit. If there is anything you want to know only tell me what it is, and I believe I can satisfy you."

"Do you live near here?"

"It's an easy drive, and I have been in and out of the Abbey all my life. Will Thorndale, Viola Orme and I were children together."

"And you are very fond of him; you must hate the very sight of me."

She shook her head and blushed.

"A girl isn't 'very fond of' indiscriminate young men when she grows up, Mr. Thorndale. I regard your cousin as an old friend, but nothing more. In fact, I am going to be married next spring, so you see I have had to limit my 'fondness' to one individual of your sex!"

Had she told him this to make him feel at ease with her; to assure him that any kindly offices she might render him had no ulterior motive?

"I can't help feeling everyone here wishes me at Jericho," said poor Ronald, sadly; "and yet it's not my fault."

"Not exactly; but you are mistaken." She had lowered her voice. "One hears all sorts of gossip in the country, and I know that Lord Kingsley and Will did not hit it off together lately; there was an awful quarrel in the summer; but it got patched up somehow; we think it was about Viola. The Kingsleys had set their hearts on her marrying Will."

"And surely he did not object?"

Jessy shook her head.

"I can't say who objected, but somebody did, and the affair is quite 'off.' Viola declares she shall never marry at all, but she is much too pretty to be an old maid."

"Pretty!" exclaimed Mr. Thorndale, absently.

"Do you call her pretty?"

"Yes; very pretty! Don't you?"

"The word seems an insult!" said Ronald, hotly. "She is the loveliest creature I ever saw!"

Miss Maitland looked amused.

"You must have made up your mind very quickly; you can't see her here, for that tall epergne quite hides her, and you were only a few minutes in the drawing-room."

"I made up my mind the minute I saw her," said Ronald, not thinking it necessary to add that his first sight of Viola had been weeks before in London.

"Well, she is a dear girl," said Jessy; "a little too modern for some people, but I am very fond of her."

"What do you mean by modern?"

Jessy opened her eyes.

"How very literal you are, Mr. Thorndale. Viola Orme is 'modern,' because she does things other girls wouldn't ever dream about. She believes in Women's Rights; spelt with a big W, you know, and all that sort of thing. Lady Kingsley always calls her 'hard,' but she isn't really; but, somehow, Viola never seems to care for the things other girls do."

The Marchioness made the signal, and the ladies rose; Ronald held open the door for them to pass through, and noticed that Viola Orme looked proud and scornful as though some one had annoyed her.

And they had. Lady Kingsley had sent her niece in to dinner under escort of Mr. Talbot, and the colonial had bored her by praising the new arrival to the skies, and assuring her her uncle had now an heir he might be proud of.

"That remains to be seen," said Lady Viola, curtly. "Personally I think my uncle would have preferred things as they were."

"I assure you Ronald has the highest testimony as to his character, and—"

"Sabas a Board-school boy seeking a first situation," interrupted Lady Viola. "On the whole, I expect that's what Mr. Thorndale feels like, a Board-school prodigy who has been admitted by chance into the society of his betters, and feels uncomfortable."

"You might make allowance for him. Everything is new and strange."

"That's just what I am saying; if my uncle could have arranged for his heir to take his meals with the upper servants in the house-keeper's room it would have been a great relief to us."

"Of course your disappointment is natural," said the colonial, now fairly angered, "remembering your relationship to William Thorndale; but with your uncle's influence he may yet attain a fair position in life, though, young lady, I warn you he has not grit enough to make a good husband."

And it was at that moment the Marchioness rose, and Viola was spared a reply; but the glance she cast on Mr. Talbot as she swept past him was angry enough to warn him he had gone too far.

"Who has presumed to offend you, Viola?" asked Jessy Maitland, taking the nearest seat by Viola's side, when the ladies had filed into the drawing-room; "do you know you look like a furious goddess."

"I feel 'furious.'"

"Not with me, I trust!"

"With everything and everybody, I think," said Viola, sadly; "you had better go away, Jessy; I warn you I am not good company."

"I shall stay and try and charm you into a better frame of mind. Do you know I have had a long and interesting *à-tête* with the claimant; stay, though, does that describe Mr. Thorndale? I don't remember if he ever claimed anything."

"Don't talk about him, Jessy. I hate the sound of his name."

"But why?" demanded Jessy, practically; "he can't have offended you, he hasn't had time, and I don't believe you are so unjust as to dislike him because he is Lord Kingsley's heir."

"Hardly. No, Jessy, I can't understand my own feelings. I used to think I was a radical, but I suppose I can't be, for I'm awfully angry that a nobody should actually be one of us."

"He's a very pleasant nobody."

"And I hate the idea that he'll be master of the Abbey. Then it's an awful blow to aunt Jessy, she and I don't always get on together, but I'm very sorry for her."

"And for Will Thorndale also! Where does he come in in your regrets, Viola?"

Viola did not blush.

"I think Will has been hardly dealt by," she said, gravely, "and he bears his reverses with a courage and spirit I could not have believed him capable of. I'm a little angry with the world, our little world. Yesterday, you know, when Will was the future Marquis of Kingsley, everyone admired him, his faults were carefully ignored; now that he is to be no one in particular our own circle of acquaintances have suddenly discovered that he was not a desirable young man, that Lord Kingsley was grossly deceived in him, and is fortunate



to have found a different hair. That's the way of the world, Jessy, and I hate it."

Jessy privately thought that if William Thorndale played his cards well he would yet succeed in winning Viola's hand; the girl could be captured through her sympathy, and would give to the disinherited man the affection she had refused to the heir apparent, and for this Jessy was sorry. She liked Viola, and she disliked and distrusted Will Thorndale.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Janet Ingleby disappeared so strangely from 49, Diamond-road, Fulham, the explanation of her departure was one never suspected by her kind-hearted landlady, nor by the girl who had given her such a generous reception when she went to make her plaint to her.

Janet Ingleby belonged to a class of women which grows rarer in these days of higher education, but is still far too common. Such women believe madly, blindly, in the man they love, and manage to persuade themselves that any sister-woman who tries to open their eyes to the flaws in their idol is guilty either of flagrant untruth, or is moved thereto by jealousy.

Janet Ingleby was a gentle, tender-hearted girl in the days when she first met William Thorndale.

She had the misfortune to love him with all her heart and soul, and her love, when it brought sorrow and pain, seemed in some marvellous way to embitter her, not against the man who was the cause of her troubles, but against every other woman more happily situated than herself.

Mrs. Belton—to begin with her—had showed her lonely lodger much kindness, and had nursed her through a severe attack of influenza as tenderly as though she had been her own flesh and blood.

She had, too, "believed" in Mr. Thorndale as long as it was possible, and never said a word in disparagement of him until Miss Ingleby, in a moment of jealous anger, had admitted her own doubts when the landlady had mentioned the rumor coupling his name with that of Lady Viola Orme.

Then Janet was a prey to mingled anger and misery. Devoted to Will, at first she took refuge in incredulity, then she made up her mind that Lady Viola was some elderly painted society heiress for whom no man could feel real affection.

Finally, she took to haunting the bijou villa in Mayfair, with the desire to see her rival; but it was only after several attempts that she gained admittance.

One would have thought the very sight of Viola's loveliness, the very kindness of her reception, would have convinced Janet of her lover's perfidy; but strange to say, just the contrary effect was induced.

Janet was furious at the slighting way in which the lady spoke of her idol, and actually managed to persuade herself that the kindly offer to befriend her if she would leave Diamond-road was just a cleverly veiled attempt to part her from Will. She went home more incensed with Viola than with the heartless deceiver she still worshipped.

At their next interview the foolish girl told William Thorndale of her visit, and the reception she had met with.

Will, in his heart, anathematized the freedom in which Viola had been brought up, and which had facilitated Janet's seeing her; but he kept his countenance admirably, knowing his next step must be to remove Janet from her present lodgings, lest Viola should come to inquire on what she had decided.

"What a stoney-hearted little creature you are, Jenny," he said, reproachfully. "Why couldn't you believe what I told you?"

"I never doubted you, Will, till you deceived me."

"Well, in this matter, at least, I have not deceived you," he said, gravely; "didn't I tell

you I dared not let my uncle know about our attachment? Didn't I say the other day I feared we should have to part, since he had 'arranged' a marriage for me? It was true, every word of it, Jenny; but I never told you I loved Viola Orme, for I never have, and never shall."

"But you mean to marry her!"

They were seated on the red velvet sofa, which only a few days later so jarred on Viola's taste. Will slipped one arm round Janet's waist.

After all it was very pleasant to be so blindly worshipped, and he was in no hurry to end the sensation. Other men had led dual lives before, why should not he? And Janet, poor little girl, had no interfering relations at hand to ask awkward questions or make a fuss.

"Listen, Jenny," he said, in his softest, most wooing tones, "I don't care for Viola, and I love you dearly; but I am a poor man, and I can't afford to offend my uncle. I have no intention of marrying Viola Orme, but I must behave for a short time longer, as if I wished to do so. I want the refusal to come from her. The Marquis can't very well be angry with me because his niece has the bad taste not to appreciate me; but if I refused to propose to her he would cut off my allowance on the spot."

"Then you are only pretending when you go to Lady Viola's and pay her attentions!"

"That's it. You know, Jenny, a man can't be in love with two women at one and the same time. Now, I am your humble slave, and so it stands to reason I can't be Viola's."

"But you said," a crimson blush of shame dyed the innocent face, for at this time Janet Ingleby, though weak and far from wise, was yet innocent as a child, "that I could not be your wife."

Will stroked her pretty hair caressingly. After all, this much was certain, he loved Janet better than any other creature except himself.

"You can't be my wife, Jenny, in the sense of living at Kingsley Abbey as my uncle's niece. You can't be my wife if it entails being presented to the Queen as the Honorable Mrs. Thorndale. You can't be my wife if it implies an establishment worthy my expectations; but—"

The girl nestled the least bit nearer to him—she seemed to hang upon his words.

"But, dear, there's no reason why you and I should not get married in a church, and by a clergyman provided you did not want to take the whole world into our confidence. If you could be content to know you were my wife, to be sure no other woman could come between us, to have every hour of my society I could spare away from my uncle, but not to bear my name, not to let my friends and acquaintances know that I had put it out of my power to obey my uncle and marry Viola—why I think we might be happy."

"Perfectly happy," sighed Janet. "I don't want riches, or grandeur, or fine friends. Only to be your wife, Will, to feel that I belong to you."

"Well, then, my little girl, it can easily be arranged," he answered, cheerfully. "Only you must remember I am a poor man and can't build such a luxurious nest for my bird as I should like to do. I am afraid it must still be lodgings even after the wedding, dear."

"I could stay here."

He shook his head.

"That wouldn't do at all. Mrs. Belton knows my name. No, Jenny, we will be married in some out of the way London church, and then go into fresh apartments as 'Mr. and Mrs. North.' We can tell the landlady that I am a 'traveller,' it's a most respectable calling, and will account for my being away from home a great deal, while as I shall be often running up and down between London and Yorkshire the name is not untrue."

"But why should we call ourselves North?" asked Janet.

"Well, you see it's the first part of my name. (Thorn) transposed, so that it's not quite like a false one, and then it is common enough not to open the way to awkward questions."

"And I must leave her!"

"Decidedly. I don't like Mrs. Belton. She is

a regular busybody. Confess now, Jenny, she has tried to persuade you I am a monster of iniquity."

"She said she did not think you meant to marry me."

"And of course you would like to convince her of her mistake," said Will, smiling; "but it can't be done just yet, Jenny. We must keep our marriage a close secret until such time as Viola Orme has refused me."

He must have been little short of a fiend, for as he spoke he knew perfectly that he never meant to give Janet the right to hear his name, and that he intended Viola Orme to become his lawful wife at the earliest opportunity; but then honour was a word unknown to William Thorndale.

Janet was his willing dupe, for the moment he spoke of marriage, and, moreover, of one performed in church, her fears fled. She had no more misgivings.

How was she to know that the Honorable (I save the mark), William Thorndale had spent six and eightpence the day before on getting a question answered by a shady solicitor whose reputation was so poor that he was glad to accord clients an interview for six-and-eightpence, answer their questions and never demand either their name or address?

Mr. Thorndale detained this worthy a much shorter time than the majority of people who found their way to his gloomy upper room, in a narrow court not far from Chancery-lane. Will put his six-and-eightpence on the table and began,—

"I only want one question answered, sir. A man marries a girl by license in a parish church, observing every possible formality her scruples can suggest; but—to keep the matter from his own family—the bridegroom throughout the ceremony uses and is addressed by a false name—is the marriage legal or not?"

"Does the bride know the name is false? Mind, I say, *know*; mere suspicion would not count."

"She has always known her lover under his rightful name. When they plan the marriage he tells her it must be solemnized under an assumed name, and together they hit on a suitable one."

"Then the marriage would be null and void," said Mr. Sharp, adding to himself as Will departed: "that man is putting his own case before me, and he's a villain if ever there was one."

But no one told Janet of that little interview, and so things went very brightly with her. It hurt her to leave Mrs. Belton without a word of goodbye or of thanks for all her kindness; but then Will had so impressed upon her that the landlady was his enemy, and had tried to prejudice Janet against him that her scruples lessened, and in the end she agreed to follow her lover's instructions in every detail.

The view Will hoped Mrs. Belton would take was that Janet had broken with him for ever, and was leaving Diamond-road to avoid all future meetings.

His own subsequent call upon the landlady, and admirably-feigned anxiety about Miss Ingleby, of course furthered this end.

It was a very fine summer's day when Janet Ingleby left Diamond-road, and her spirits were of the highest. There was a little kindly regret at leaving Mrs. Belton; but there was not the slightest remorse for the trick she was playing on Viola Orme.

Kind as the heiress had been to her Janet could never forgive her slighting mention of Will.

Nothing in the world would have convinced Janet that Viola did not want Mr. Thorndale herself, and that her offer of protection and assistance to Janet had not been part of a deep-laid scheme to part her from her lover.

Viola drove to Victoria Station, and left her luggage in the cloak-room, first taking the precaution to fasten on some new labels, legibly addressed, "Mrs. William North."

She blushed as she did so, and then, going into the booking office, she tried to busy herself reading the announcements of "Summer trips," till Will came up looking very spruce and prosperous in a light grey suit.

"Well met little woman!" he said, cheerily; "now shall we have a cab or walk?"

It ended in his deciding, for Janet had no will of her own. So they went out together into the sunshine, and after walking down sundry side streets and quiet roads they came to a large hideous building of the Early Georgian date, whose notice-board outside proclaimed to all and sundry that it was the church of St. Margaret.

Janet Ingleby half shivered as she crossed its threshold. There was that peculiar damp musty smell which buildings shut up from Sunday to Sunday never lose even in summer.

The old-fashioned high pews and three decker seemed to her appalling; but Will was beside her, and what did anything else matter!

The Vicar was away taking his holiday, and the *locum tenens*, who had only been in the parish two days, had, of course, no knowledge that the bridal pair were not members of the congregation, and had, in fact, never entered the church before.

The clerk and the pew-opener were there as witnesses. There was no appearance of haste or confusion; indeed, the clergyman put it down in his own mind as one of those weddings (common enough now in London) where the bride and bridegroom, both being alone in apartments earning their daily bread, had elected to go through life together, and having no intimate friends near, and not feeling equal to the expense of franking their home-people's journey to London, had sensibly decided to be married "quietly," and afterwards go to the old "home" for a few days to introduce the new partner in life's joys.

Mr. Smith had a clear, powerful voice and a reverent manner. He read the beautiful service in very different fashion from that adopted by the absent Vicar, and he even troubled himself later on in the vestry to shake hands with Mr. and Mrs. North, and wish them all happiness in their married life.

He was a clever man, and had only come to St. Margaret's for a month, because he knew he was getting rusty from living in a remote village, and this was the only way by which he could enjoy a stay in town. He was not only clever but thoughtful, kind-hearted, and penetrating; yet, with all these qualities, he utterly failed to see anything tragic in Janet Ingleby's wedding.

Of course at home (that is in his own village) friends and neighbours flocked to see each wedding, but Mr. Smith knew that in great towns life was far more isolated; he put the couple down as poor (who but poor people would be married in that humble church!) and once admitting their poverty it went far to explain their loneliness.

"You're mine now," said Will Thorndale, with a thrill of passion in his voice as he and his wife drove to a restaurant where he had ordered lunch. Be sure he had avoided Piccadilly and Regent-street, this particular restaurant was near Leicester-square, and kept by a foreigner. Will often patronised it himself, but he knew that he was not likely to meet any of his friends there.

"And now my dear," he said, when they were seated at a little marble-topped table and he had pledged her in champagne, "don't forget that you are Mrs. William North, and your husband travels in the jewelry. We'd better choose that line, dear, because it will account for our both being tolerably well set up with trinkets."

She laughed from pure light heartedness.

"But I may call you Will, for I am glad you did not change your Christian name."

"We'll stick to Will and Jenny. Please Mrs. North, have you any views as to our future residence?"

She shook her head.

"I know that it must not be near Diamond-road, and I know no other part of London."

"It must be the other side; if we settle ourselves across the river there won't be any danger of falling in with people we want to avoid."

"But wouldn't it be too far for you?"

"Nineteen minutes or so in the train; besides, Jenny, I must be at the Abbey most of August, so you see it doesn't much matter what part of London we selected."

"And have you thought?"

"I've done better. I have taken some rooms,

They are quite a different class from Mrs. Belton's; this landlady keeps a servant, and has a very decent-looking daughter. I have taken the drawing-room floor, and given them to understand we are a newly married couple and I want you not to be too lonely while I'm away on my journeys. Of course you won't trust them with any of our secrets; but it will be better for you to have people in the house you could have a talk with than just be shut up with one old woman who waits on you and lectures you by turns."

Janet thought how very considerate he was, never guessing that after weighing the subject well he had decided people in a rather better position than Mrs. Belton would be less likely to be inquisitive.

"I can stay till Monday, then I must run down to the Abbey; it's not a very long honeymoon, is it, Jenny?"

They reached Camberwell soon after five, and found tea awaiting them. It was a strange coincidence that William Thorndale should have taken the very rooms occupied not long before by his uncle, but Will had never been a favourite with Mr. Grey, and so far from knowing where he lodged was not even aware it was in Camberwell.

Mrs. Dale's rooms were pleasant and what is called "superior." He thought she would be above the gossip which was as daily bread to Mrs. Belton, while she and her daughter together would "look after" Jenny while he was away.

This man had not hesitated to do poor Janet the cruellest wrong that can be offered woman, and yet—such a strange mixture was he—he took thought for her loneliness, the explanation was that, as said before, he really did love Janet, only he loved himself more.

The neat servant received them, and ushered Mrs. North into her bed-room; then her dress changed and her hat removed, Janet was pleased at the feeling that Will was infinitely dearer to her, infinitely more her own than he had ever been before.

Poor girl!

And it was straight from the side of the woman who thought herself his wife that William Thorndale went to Kingsley Abbey to hasten his wooing of Viola Orme.

(To be continued.)

## WHICH IS THE HEIRESS?

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### CHAPTER IX.—(continued.)

MR. PELHAM pondered long and earnestly over the question, after Miss Daly had left him; then he came to a conclusion. He would give to Mary Seymour's daughter a comfortable competency for life. Surely she should be contented with that, considering the fact that she had no possible claim upon him; and she should be thankful too for the flight into high life which he had afforded her.

Miss Daly had gone to her room, with a thoughtful face.

"If I could but find out which of the two he favours I would then know the result," she mused. "But he treats Beatrice and Hester so exactly alike in everything that I am puzzled."

With her keen intuition Miss Daly had noticed that which had escaped the eyes of everyone else, and that was the fact that Beatrice was fascinated with handsome Wyndham Powis. Ay, it was getting to be more than fascination; it was growing into a love that would be as strong as her very life.

But Miss Daly could not tell which of the two girls Wyndham Powis liked the best. He laughed and talked with Beatrice, appeared to enjoy her ready wit and brilliant conversation; but there was a different look in his eyes when they rested upon fair, sweet Hester.

"If it is possible that Beatrice is in love with Lord Powis, and he should not return her affection, her disappointment will be great. I

must warn her about letting her heart go out to him until he shows a preference for her society."

But the mischief had already been done. Beatrice loved him with all the love such a nature as hers was capable of bestowing—a love which knew no moderation, no bounds. She had no thought for anyone else.

Her brilliant, wonderful beauty brought many would-be suitors about her; but she hardly saw them. Her ideas, her hopes, all began and ended with him. The days and weeks passed, as days and weeks always do, whether they be shortened by happiness or lengthened by sorrow, but Beatrice kept no count of time. Deep down in her heart she said to herself,—

"I have met my fate." And the words seemed unutterably sweet to her.

She tried hard to prevent other people from noticing how his presence affected her. She tried hard to keep back the tell-tale blush that swept over her face at the sound of his footsteps, the dazed feeling that came over her in his presence, the restlessness that always seized her when he was talking to any other young girl, and the sudden pain that flashed through her heart if he spoke admiringly of anyone else.

With every day that dawned, with every sun that rose and set, with every moon that waxed and waned, Beatrice's love deepened. The whole world held nothing for her but him. She became absorbed in this one great passion, never asking herself how it would end. She never asked herself whether her great love would be returned.

One afternoon Miss Daly surprised her by stepping out suddenly upon the balcony upon which she stood, with the dreamy look upon her face which was so often there of late.

The girl started at the sound of her footsteps. "Who did you think it was?" asked Miss Daly, noting the disappointed look.

"I thought—possibly—it might be—Lord Powis," answered Beatrice. "He often joins me in this favourite nook."

Miss Daly moved nearer, and laid a detaining hand on the girl's arm, looking wistfully in her face as she said,—

"I should like you to answer me a question, Beatrice, looking upon me as one who has your interest at heart in asking it, and that is: do you care for Lord Powis?"

Beatrice's beautiful face grew deathly pale. She had told herself over and over again that she was guarding her sweet, bewildering, wonderful secret well. How could Miss Daly have possibly guessed it!

"Do you?" persisted Miss Daly, trying to speak carelessly.

"Yes," replied Beatrice. "To know him is to like him, surely."

"I do not mean 'like,' Beatrice. I ought to have put my question in stronger words. Do you love him, Beatrice?"

The flush that rose to the girl's beautiful face answered her better than any admission could have done.

She drew herself up proudly.

"Why should I not confess the truth?" she answered, looking straight into Miss Daly's face. "Yes, I—love—him!"

"You should have waited until he asked for your love ere you allowed your heart to go out to him, child," said Miss Daly, huskily. "To give one's love unasked is not right. Many a young girl has rued it."

"I have no fear," responded the young girl, with spirit.

"It is a very one-sided story," went on Miss Daly, not noticing the interruption. "Suppose he was only gallant to you as a friend. How do you know that he does not love someone else?"

The quick flash of bitter pain that looked out of the girl's eyes for an instant made her woman's heart ache for the beautiful Beatrice.

"I am sure there is no truth in your supposition," declared the girl. "Do you see anyone among the young girls who have been here as guests that he has seemed to admire more than me?"

"No one among the guests," said Miss Daly. "But has it not occurred to you that he is equally



as friendly with Hester as he is with you! He certainly admires Hester greatly."

The cluster of roses she held in her hands fell suddenly to her feet; the beautiful face darkened so terribly that Miss Daly was alarmed. In all the years she had known this girl she had never seen such an exhibition of violent passion.

"Beatrice," she murmured, "listen to me: I warn you not to learn to love Wyndham Powis, for, if I am not mistaken, he cares for you as a friend, a pleasant companion—nothing more."

After saying this, Miss Daly thought it wiser to go away, leaving Beatrice alone to think over what she had said to her.

The words had struck deep into the girl's heart, as she knew they would. Beatrice pondered long and wonderingly over them.

"He is my fate, my ideal, my love!" she murmured. "Surely it is love which looks out of his eyes as they seek mine; love which thrills his hand at the touch of mine; love which keeps him lingering at my side, contented—ay, happy in my company!"

The thought of Hester in connection with him had not occurred to her before. True, Hester was generally with them in their rambles, but she was very shy. She could not remember that he had ever addressed any conversation to Hester. It was always to herself he had turned his handsome, laughing face with his remarks. She had taken no account of Hester's presence. Miss Daly must be greatly mistaken in fancying he admired Hester. She would watch for herself and see if there was any foundation for the thought. And that was how the pitiful tragedy began.

## CHAPTER X.

SINCE the hour Miss Daly had suggested the possibility of Wyndham Powis caring for Hester, Beatrice had not known one hour's peace.

A lawn party had been decided upon at Elm Villa, and Beatrice said to herself that this was the occasion upon which she would decide for herself.

She watched Hester keenly, but she could not decide whether or not she was in love with the handsome young lord.

Once she broached the matter to the girl. Was it only her fancy, or did Hester colour deeply when his name was mentioned?

"Of all the guests we have had at Elm Villa I certainly think Lord Powis the most charming," said Beatrice, carelessly; adding: "Do you prefer anyone else to him?"

"No," said Hester, quietly, in a very low tone. "He has all the accomplishments; dancing, golfing, riding and rowing."

"And talking nonsense to pretty girls when he doesn't mean a word of it," pursued Beatrice. Hester looked startled.

"I cannot believe that Lord Powis would talk nonsense," she said, "or say one word he did not mean."

Beatrice threw back her dark, curly head with a loud laugh.

"What an innocent girl you are!" she cried. "One would almost fancy that you were born yesterday. Young men are proverbially fickle. They say whatever they think will please you, laughing the while to themselves."

She could not understand the look that came into Hester's eyes which met her gaze. Suddenly she turned toward Hester, exclaiming in a teasing voice,—

"I am almost led to believe that he is flattering you, Hester!"

"No," said the girl, under her breath. "Oh, no—not!"

At that moment Miss Daly joined them, and all further conversation between the two girls was cut short.

The conversation turned on general topics.

Hester had always worn black so far, and it was therefore left to Beatrice to deck herself out as gaily as she chose, making the contrast between the two girls the more striking. Nothing was talked of for the next three days but the lawn party.

On the evening before it was to take place Bea-

trice and Wyndham Powis were in the dining-room, discussing some minor detail of the affair, when she turned on him suddenly with a bewitching smile on her face.

"I found on my plate at luncheon to-day an almond that has two kernels in it. I did not eat it. I saved it."

"May I ask why you saved it?"

"Yes; to eat a philopona with you," she declared.

There was no resisting the bewitching smile.

"I am a novice at that little game," he declared. "Perhaps you will explain to me what part I take in it?"

"Certainly," she replied. "You are to eat one of the kernels of the almond; I am to eat the other. You can make the forfeit to suit yourself, as to whether it will be give and take, or request and promise. By that I mean, after you have eaten the almond, if in five minutes after I should hand you a piece of music, and you should take it from my hand, and I would say 'Philopona!' you would be obliged then to buy me a present."

"Oh, that obligation could be very easily met," he answered lightly. "I don't know what little trifles girls like, never having had a sister, but I suppose you could give me a hint could you not?"

"The alternative is called 'request and promise,'" went on Beatrice—that is, she went on quietly, "if I should make a request of you at any time within a fortnight, you would be in honour bound to comply with it within that space of time."

"Certainly," he responded. "That would be a pleasure. If the fates should determine that you are the losing party the same penalty holds good!"

"Yes," she answered; and thus the compact was made.

The two kernels were eaten rapidly, and with mock gravity. The next half hour was spent with amusing results. He admired a flower she was wearing at her belt, but he would not take it from her hand when she offered it to him.

"If I am to have it lay it down, please. You see I am on my guard," he declared, "against taking anything from those fair hands."

Beatrice laughed gaily.

"Patience itself."

The conversation drifted to the all-absorbing lawn-party on the morrow.

"A young lady in the neighbourhood helped us to make out the list, but Hester wrote down the names of a few young gentlemen whom she wished to be invited."

"May I see them?" he asked, with all interest.

"Ah! I have found something to awaken his curiosity at last," thought Beatrice.

He took the paper from her eagerly, all un-mindful of the compact that was existing, until he was forcibly reminded of its existence by Beatrice remarking quietly,—

"Philopona!"

He laughed heartily at the clever ruse, which he was obliged to admit.

"That means a present, I suppose?"

"I choose to have the other version of it," she declared. "I will make a request, and you must promise what I ask."

"If it be within my power it shall be granted," he declared.

For a time she made no reply, but the dazzling smile that flitted over her face startled him for a moment.

"What shall it be?" he asked, laughingly.

The laugh died away when he heard what it was.

"I should like you to be my escort at the lawn-party, and dance with me, and no one else, the whole day, taking me to luncheon, and playing the part of devotee in general."

The look on his face startled her. She could not tell whether it was perplexity or annoyance. It was certainly not pleasure. He was puzzled to know how to answer her.

She had ardently believed that he would be delighted with the proposition, for it would mean that all her enjoyment would depend upon him. She had said to herself, "This will be a test,

whether or no he cares for me. I will soon know."

His next words confirmed Beatrice's gravest doubts.

"I ought to be very grateful to you for making the proposition," he said; "but to speak plainly, I have made another engagement for that time, which explains the embarrassing position in which I am placed."

Beatrice turned deathly pale.

"You were in a great hurry to secure a partner," she said, in a chilling voice. "May I ask the name of the young lady?"

"It would hardly be right to mention it in advance," he said, with a little flush on his face. "It came about in such a casual way," he went on. "The young lady has never been to a lawn-party, and she intimated that she would stay away from this because she had no partner."

"Allow me to be your partner," I said.

"She consented. Her words and my reply were both uttered in jest; still, I hold myself to it, as I presume she will."

Beatrice drew a sigh of relief.

"Oh, if that is all, the promise is not binding. She will not expect you to keep your word, I assure you."

"Would not you expect it, had you been in the other girl's place?" he asked, eagerly.

"Certainly not," she declared. "I would treat it only as a jest, as she no doubt does. She might feel hurt if you actually took her at her word."

"Do you really think so?" he asked, musingly.

"I am sure of it," responded Beatrice.

He looked thoughtful for a moment.

"If you feel quite sure about this matter then I need have no hesitancy in giving you my promise," he said, gravely.

And so the matter was settled.

Long after Beatrice had left him Wyndham Powis stood looking thoughtfully out of the window, wondering if he had done right in promising Beatrice until he had first asked Hester.

But of course she knew Hester must have been in jest. The matter troubled him.

When Beatrice left Wyndham Powis she went directly to Hester's room. She would find out for herself if her suspicions were true—that Hester was the girl whom he had selected as his partner.

Not that she would give him up—never! Hester was sewing some black ribbons on her black mull dress in anticipation of the coming party.

"Dear me! you are late in arranging your dress," she said. "I had mine all ready over a week ago."

"Yes, I know," said Hester. "To tell you the truth, I spent the money which Mr. Pelham gave me to have this black mull dress made. A poor widow woman was to have been put out of her cottage because she could not pay her rent. The amount I had was just the sum she needed, so I gave it to her. I will barely get the dress done, yet I feel so happy in the thought that the money did more good than it would have done in the original manner in which it was intended to be used."

"Have you a partner for the lawn-party?" asked Beatrice, trying to speak calmly.

The girl hung her beautiful head in girlish bashfulness.

"Is it some one that I know who is going to take you?"

Hester's fair sweet face flushed scarlet. How could she tell Beatrice after the conversation they had had about Wyndham Powis that it was he who had asked her to go to the lawn-party?

## CHAPTER XI.

"NEVER mind; if you do not choose to tell me I shall not ask you," said Beatrice, noting Hester's confusion. "I want to tell you about my escort," said Beatrice. "You see, he had partly promised to take another girl; but when he found out he could get me, he made up his mind at once that the other girl must get whoever she could, as he would take the girl he cared most for."

"I should think that would be very unfair

toward the other girl," said Hester, thoughtfully.

"That does not seem to trouble him."

"But would it not trouble you?" asked Hester, earnestly.

"No, certainly not," she declared. "I should be only too proud to know that I had the preference, that he liked me best!"

Hester pondered over the words long after Beatrice had left her.

"I could not be so cruel as to take a lover away from any other girl. Perhaps I am over sensitive on this subject. It does not seem to me very honourable."

When Hester descended to the dining-room a few moments later she found Lord Pelham, Wyndham Powis and Beatrice already assembled at the table.

Wyndham Powis stopped short in the remark he was making, and somehow Hester thought it must be concerning herself.

There was music in the drawing-room that evening. Both Lord Pelham and Lord Powis were fond of music.

For the first time in her gentle life regret swept over Hester's heart that music had not been a part of her education.

She did not know one key from the other of the grand piano of which Beatrice seemed to be mistress.

She had a magnificent voice, too, and she sung so gloriously that those who listened were fairly carried away by her melody. So it seemed to Hester.

Beatrice sang song after song, keeping Wyndham Powis at the piano turning the music for her, as he listened enraptured.

Somehow Hester could not bear to see it.

No one knew when she slipped out of the room. She was not missed until long afterwards.

Beatrice was singing the song of a fair and gentle girl whose love was her life.

Wyndham Powis drew a deep sigh as she finished.

"The heroine of the song makes me think of you, Hester," he said, turning round.

To his surprise he found she was not there.

"When did Hester leave the room?" he asked, in amazement. "I did not see her go."

"Oh, it was some time since," said Beatrice, carelessly. "She had a letter to write, and she was afraid if she did not post it to-night it would not go by the early post to-morrow."

Wyndham Powis made no reply, but he looked very thoughtful.

"I hope she will enjoy the lawn-party," she said. "She has told me that she has never been to one."

They were but a few words, and carelessly uttered, but a quick thought flashed through Beatrice's mind. He had been talking to Hester, then, upon the subject of the lawn-party, and therefore it must have been Hester and no other whom he had asked to escort there. Should she, by adroit questioning, attempt to discover the truth? She could not lose the opportunity.

"If I were to give you a little message," she said, "would you take it kindly?"

"Why not?" he asked. "If the message is unpleasant, the one who is obliged to give it is usually made to feel that he comes in for considerable of the displeasure occasioned; but it will not be so in this case I assure you."

"It is a message from Hester," said Beatrice. "She begs that you will never refer to a certain conversation which you two had together, recently, as it would pain her very much to discuss it with you. It was with regard to the lawn-party."

"Now," thought Beatrice, "I shall get at the bottom of this mystery. If it is not Hester whom he has asked he will look at me in amazement. If it is she he will think at once that it is regarding some other matter."

"She need have no fear," he answered, proudly. "If she was only in jest about accepting my escort, why, then I can have nothing to say. I shall be only too glad to have her please herself."

He made an effort to be entertaining to Beatrice during the hour that followed, but she

could plainly see that his heart was not in his words.

Once or twice he made the great mistake of calling her Hester. That was how she knew of the direction of his thoughts, and her heart sunk.

"Would you mind it very much if I were called away, and could not be present at the lawn-party?" he asked, slowly.

"Yes," she answered; adding: "You have said you would be there, and you cannot break your promise."

He looked troubled.

"Your will must be my law," he said.

Shortly afterward he bid her good-night.

Beatrice stepped out on the balcony. She was glad he had left her as he did; for if he had remained another moment she would certainly have cried out, so great was the pain at her heart.

The truth had come to her in an instant, quick as the flash of lightning that blights a fair tree. Miss Daly's surmise was quite true—he preferred fair, gentle Hester to herself.

Had she been blind, that she, of all people, had not noticed it before?

She was in a whirl of emotion.

"He must know that I love him," she murmured, passionately.

She stood still, looking at the broad landscape, the purple hills, and the river, like a winding-sheet of silver, under the moon's rays; and lovely as it all was, she said to herself that, without him, it would be a dreary desert.

It was quite half an hour afterward that Miss Daly, searching for her, found her on the little balcony. She drew aside the silken hangings and called to her, and wondered why the girl paused some minutes before answering. Then Beatrice said, in a low, calm voice,—

"I am thinking, and I do not wish to be disturbed."

Miss Daly did not seem quite satisfied.

When the sound of her rustling skirts had died away, Beatrice bowed her head on the balcony railing and wept. The thorns of the climbing rose branches pierced her forehead, but the pain in her heart was so great that she did not feel them.

She stretched out her arms to the starlit heavens, and wept as she had never wept in her life before.

There came to her the distant sound of music. The night-sky was studded with a thousand golden stars; the fragrant flowers drooped their heads; the birds slept; but the peaceful scene brought no calmness to her disturbed heart.

She did not strive to subdue the tempest of emotion that shook her. Ah, well! moonlight and starlight have looked upon strange scenes before now, but they never saw a face more convulsed with passion; they never saw such a tempest of despair as raged in the soul of that beautiful girl.

The winds sighed around her, the pale starlight fell on the sleeping flowers, but neither calm nor beauty was to touch her then, or for evermore.

Now that her eyes were opened she saw a thousand things that pointed out to her that he cared for Hester. It is said the gods first blind those whom they would destroy.

Yes, she had been blinded most cruelly.

Only a few days before, a little incident had occurred which came forcibly back to her mind now.

There was a party of young people in the porch; they were discussing fate.

Wyndham Powis had declared that he firmly believed in it.

"One can always tell when one meets one's fate," he insisted. "They are drawn to each other irresistibly. There is always a desire to be in each other's company whenever the opportunity presents itself; or, in fact, to make opportunities whenever they do not exist."

His back was turned toward her. She could see Hester blush. It did not occur to her at the time that he had looked at Hester; but as the scene recurred to her now, she knew that their glances must have met, and that they must have surely understood each other.

He had made the opportunity of trying to be with Hester at the lawn-party, and it would have been an accomplished fact if she had not parted them by strategy.

"Why should I love him?" she repeated, hoarsely. "Why should it be my fate to love this man who does not care for me?"

And then and there she made a vow which influenced her future life and made of it one long tragedy.

She vowed that she would win his love from Hester at any cost; that her beauty, and the gifts which nature had lavished upon her, should all be used for this one purpose. Even as she had undying love, so she would have undying patience. She would never weary; she would win in the end, despite all obstacles. It might take her weeks—long, weary months. And from that hour she began to hate Hester with a terrible hatred, such as only natures like hers are capable of.

"She stands between me and a fortune," she muttered; "and she stands between me and the man I love!"

## CHAPTER XII.

THE morning of the lawn-party dawned clear and bright, and the view of the surrounding country was magnificent. Both girls were up early that day; Hester humming a sweet refrain from the joyousness of her heart; Beatrice restless and uneasy with strange misgivings, watching the road intently.

An early breakfast was prepared, and Hester entered the dining-room and partook of her simple repast alone, then hurried into the garden afterward to gather a few flowers to leave with Mr. Pelham.

The hour of the lawn-party was not far off, yet it seemed a long while for patient, waiting Hester, who had thought of this pleasure by night and by day until it had become almost a part of her life.

Beatrice came down to the breakfast-room in a flurry of feverish excitement. The delicate viands that were set before her did not please her. She was irritable and impatient, nothing pleased her capricious fancy. Eating the luscious fruit hastily, she pushed away the remainder of her food untasted, and sauntered aimlessly out of the room.

As she was passing along the corridor she caught sight of a slim, dark figure fluttering among the rose-bushes in the yard beyond, and she knew that it was Hester.

"Is that you, up and dressed so early? For whom are you picking that bouquet of choice flowers?" asked Beatrice, loftily. "For your escort, if I may ask?"

"Oh, no," laughed Hester, modestly. "I am only gathering a few roses for Mr. Pelham. He is so fond of flowers. I had not thought of my escort until you spoke."

"I know of someone who would have liked to have escorted you to the lawn-party, and who begged me to ask you if he might have the pleasure of your company there. I had forgotten all about poor Harry Beardon's request until just this minute, which I fear is too late, is it not?"

"Yes; thanks! I have my escort, and that was arranged some time ago, as I told you the other day; yet it was very good of you to mention me to him, I am sure."

"Not changing the conversation, would you mind coming upstairs in a few minutes and letting me see what you intend to wear? I know it is prettier than my dress."

"I am going to wear my black mull, with the addition of a few lavender ribbons. It isn't quite new, but then, that won't make any difference."

"There will be no need of us waiting for each other," said Beatrice. "I will start a little earlier than you with my escort, because I must stop and make a few purchases. It won't make any difference if we do not go together, will it?" she asked, shortly.

Hester did not like to be unreasonable, and so she answered,—



"Do as you please in all respects, Beatrice, and you will suit me."

"I should think you would manage to stay here in this cool garden until the time for you to go, Hester," she said. "In the front of the house you can only see the dusty road, and an occasional waggon or so passing by. Will you take my advice and remain out here awhile?"

"I will remain here until it is time to dress," said Hester, quietly.

A moment after, the two girls parted, Beatrice rushing hastily to her room to don her prettiest jewellery and most bewitching costume, Hester strolling thoughtfully among the odorous blooms, her thoughts happy ones, for she was picturing to herself Wyndham's coming, even as she looked long and anxiously at her little chateleine watch for the twentieth time, with a tell-tale flush on her sweet young face.

She lingered out there until the moments passed into hours, then she remembered how time was flying, and turned her footsteps toward the house, going directly to her room, where she commenced her simple toilet, her young face flushing, her bright eyes glowing tenderly the while.

When Beatrice had left Hester she had gone directly to her room, where she found Miss Daly awaiting her. Beatrice was in a highly nervous state of mind. She found fault with everything around her, then she stopped abruptly, for her aunt's eyes were fixed upon her in a vague, bewildered manner.

"Where is Hester?" she asked. "Is she not going with you?"

"She prefers going alone," was the evasive reply.

There was a tremor in her voice, which her aunt readily detected; but she thought it wisest to not mention her misgivings.

She could not help going up to her, however, and peering anxiously in her highly flushed face while helping to arrange her glossy curls. At first she could not catch a sight of the half-averted face. After a moment or so she turned the half-hidden features round to the light, and looked anxiously at her.

"Beatrice," she said, pityingly.

The girl raised her eyes to hers quickly, half defiantly, and to her amazement she saw that the beautiful face was wet with tears, which she was too proud to have her see.

"Beatrice," she said, huskily, "what troubles you?"

"Nothing," she replied, petulantly; "it's only a headache. Can't a person have their own thoughts without being interrupted?"

"You must not allow yourself to become so excited. That's enough to cause headaches," she said, sharply, reproaching herself for having misjudged her by thinking her too hopelessly in love with young Powis, who had not as yet declared his intentions.

When her aunt had finished dressing her her capricious mood had changed for the better. The girl was conscious of her own beauty, of her exceeding loveliness, and her spirits rose high as she surveyed herself critically in the tall mirror.

"I, who once laughed at love and lovers, who thought there was nothing on earth desirable but money, now find that love is a great, unquenchable fire with me. Woe to anybody who opposes it."

The little clock on the mantel-piece struck the hour of ten.

Beatrice started at the last stroke, died away. A few moments later, and the handsome young man she loved so madly would be waiting for her. It would not do to let Hester see them go off together. The wisest course would be for her to go down the pebbled walk that led to the second gate, which was out of sight of the house, shaded by a row of trees, and so raise her white parasol to him as he passed by with the carriage.

Suiting the action to the word, Beatrice took a hurried leave of Miss Daly, then sped hurriedly away, awaiting Wyndham Powis at the farthest gate.

Her patience was soon rewarded by seeing him drive in her direction. He caught sight of the

white, whirling parasol, and immediately drew rein as he recognised its fair owner.

The next instant she was seated in the carriage beside him, and they were whirling gaily away in the direction of the lawn-party.

Everyone looked at the lovely pair as they rode smilingly away. He was amused for the time by her bright, witty conversation, though when he had first started out Wyndham Powis was inclined to be grave and thoughtful.

He smiled at the efforts which she used to amuse him. He was more touched than he cared to own by her unmistakable liking for him. He did not suspect that it was love which prompted those significant glances and bright, laughing remarks. Beatrice never looked more beautiful than on this particular day.

To her frivolous mind there was but one earthly good that was beneficial to the young, and that was beauty.

That Wyndham Powis should admire her, love her, and wish to marry her, after a short time, for her lovely face, seemed to be quite natural and a settled fact.

She noticed eagerly that the half-indifferent manner in which he usually addressed her was changed to one of courteous, half-tender deference.

He would love her in time, she told herself, and that one thought filled her with unutterable happiness.

She smiled to herself to think how dearly she had loved him, even as the shadow of fear crossed her mind as to how his friendship for Hester would turn out.

"It will be a pitched battle between us, for I am bound to win his love. Let any rival beware! It will be her death to cross my path. I swear I would kill her first! I could never part with him with only the words 'Good-bye' from his lips—no, never!"

Meanwhile, Hester robed herself in her simple black mull dress, which was brightened up with shining lavender silk bows, and sprays of dainty white blossoms fastened in her bodice and in the meshes of her fair, waving hair. Never was there a daintier picture of beauty than fair, sweet Hester made.

When she had finished her toilet she sat down and waited by the window for Wyndham Powis to come, looking after every passing carriage with a slight shade of disappointment.

Thus hour after hour passed by, and Hester still sat by the window, watching, waiting, while the moments passed into hours. Still he came not.

How long she sat there she never remembered afterwards.

Presently she was startled by the sound of carriage-wheels. She listened in a flutter of excitement, and soon after the servant tapped at her door, and announced that Mr. Harry Reardon would like to see her in the parlour below. She was greatly disappointed when she heard it was not Wyndham Powis who had called; but she hurried down to see him.

Harry Reardon greeted her pleasantly; he had always been an ardent admirer of hers, and he hastened to ask her if she had considered the message he had sent her by Beatrice to give him the privilege of escorting her to the lawn-party.

"I had made a previous engagement to go with someone else," she was just about to say, when he added,—

"I thought you would be lonesome if you remained at home, Hester, for I saw Beatrice and Wyndham Powis ride away some time ago together, and all the rest of the young folks are there. Say yes, Hester, and we will join them. My carriage is at the door."

The thought that Wyndham Powis had gone with another wounded her pride, and she answered, sprightly,—

"Yes, Mr. Reardon, I will go with you."

(To be continued.)

[This Story commenced in No. 1763.]

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## THE DOCTOR'S WARD.

—101—

(Continued from page 461.)

"I repeat," said Basil, wearily, "I judged it best, child. Why can't you enjoy yourself, and leave business matters to me? The Court will be vacant before you are of age, and there is a special clause in the agreement that Mr. Leslie should vacate it at a six months' notice if you married during the tenure of his tenancy, and wished to make the place your home."

"I think you have been very mean. I don't care for money. I would rather have had the place empty."

"It can't be altered now."

"I know that. Well, I shall be abroad, so I am never likely to see the people there!"

"They are a charming family. I think you are more than likely to see them."

"Why?"

"Mr. Leslie is Mrs. Talbot's brother. His eldest son is going to accompany her in her tour."

Ivy turned on him with flashing eyes.

"Then I shan't go!"

"Nonsense!"

"You know I hate young men, and yet you inveigled me into going."

"I persuaded you into going before I heard young Leslie was to be one of the party."

"You might have warned me, then."

"I never thought you would object. He's as nice a young fellow as you'd meet in a day's journey."

"How old?"

"Twenty-four."

"I hate boys!"

Basil shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear child, you are unreasonable. I suppose you can't help it, but you talk like a baby."

"You are always abusing me. How delighted you'll be to get rid of me for ever so long."

The party started the following week, and if ever foreign tour were successful Mrs. Talbot's ought to have been. Beautiful weather, an experienced courier, the lady herself well up in continental lions, and Ralph Leslie, despite his youth, quite a veteran traveller. Aunt and nephew devoted themselves to Ivy, and did their utmost to give her pleasure. The new scenes, the constant change, the pure mountain air chased away the shadows from Ivy's face and gave a healthy colour to her cheek. She enjoyed herself enormously, and said so quite frankly.

"How dull Dolby-square will seem after this!" she said one night, as they sat watching the sun sink, and give a crimson radiance to the water of Lake Geneva.

"Need you go back there?" asked Mrs. Talbot, a little eagerly. "Ivy, don't you know that Ralph is only waiting an opportunity to ask you to exchange Basil Ross's guardianship for his?"

Ivy started.

"Are you sure?"

"I have seen it for days."

"Oh, I wish he wouldn't!"

"In the idea so very unpleasant to you!"

"Yes, Mrs. Talbot," kissing her fondly. "Don't be angry with me. Indeed, indeed, I never guessed it; never thought of such a thing."

"Couldn't you begin to think about it, Ivy?"

Ivy shook her head.

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"I never mean to marry anyone."  
"You will change your mind."  
"I am quite sure. Oh! Mrs. Talbot, couldn't you tell Mr. Leslie that he must find someone else much nicer than I am?"  
Mrs. Talbot looked thoughtful.  
"You need not fear any objections from Dr. Ross."

"I know," bitterly. "So that he gets rid of me he is quite satisfied."

Her friend looked at her in surprise.  
"I can't think why you dislike your guardian so much, Ivy. He is a great favourite of mine."

"I hate him!"  
"Why?"  
Ivy hesitated.  
"He will think I am foolish and childish. He seems to think I have but one wish, one idea—to get married."

"He is a good man. You can't think how kind he was to Mrs. Chubb."

"Mrs. Talbot," struck by a sudden thought, "have you Mrs. Chubb's address?"

"Certainly. Dr. Ross opened business for her at the West-end; he asked me to buy what I could there."

Mr. Leslie never asked Ivy the question on his lips; perhaps his aunt gave him a hint it would be useless—perhaps he thought it would be rash to risk all, and while he deliberated a telegram from his father recalled him to England.

Mrs. Talbot and Ivy followed more slowly. Basil's wilful ward insisted that no news of their return should be sent to the dull house in Dolby-square, and the kindly chaperon readily assented, only too pleased to retain her bright winsome companion a day or two after she got home.

It was Ivy's own wish to go alone the first morning she was in England and see Mrs. Chubb. She had never forgotten her kindness in those bleak January days which seemed so long ago; and in spite of Basil's refusal to give her the address she believed the widow would be pleased with her sympathy.

She knocked at the private door, and did not give her name, merely saying a young lady wished to see Mrs. Chubb.

She had not to wait long; a moment or two and the widow entered. Oh, how pale and careworn—how sad and altered she seemed.

But, to Ivy's dismay, instead of a kindly welcome Mrs. Chubb flushed crimson at the sight of her, and clung to the table for support.

"Don't you know me?" whispered the girl, sadly; "I am Ivy Trefusis, whom you were so kind to."

"Oh, my dear," cried Mrs. Chubb, "to think of your coming here. I always felt as if I should sink into the earth at the sight of you."

"But why?"

"I never thought you'd speak gently and kindly," sobbed the poor widow. "It's the thought of you, Miss Trefusis, that lies heaviest at my heart. Many's the night I've laid awake and thought I'd give my own life willingly if it could undo the wrong we've wrought you."

Ivy made Mrs. Chubb sit down, with the gentle impetuosity no one could resist. She put her in a chair by the fire, and kissed and comforted her as though she had been her daughter.

"You never wronged me in your life; you were the kindest friend to me."

"My dear, we meant to be."

"You were."

"Dr. Ross can't have told you, Miss Trefusis."

"Ivy," corrected the girl, gently.

"Ivy, then. He's a good man, but surely he never kept such a secret from you!"

"What secret?" asks Ivy, faintly.

"That my brother-in-law made away with your whole fortune, except the house where your papa died and the place in the country. You were ruined. The shock killed my husband; it well-nigh killed me. I felt as if we had robbed the fatherless. Dr. Ross was like an angel to me."

"What did he say?"

"He told me the dearest wish of his heart was to marry you; that if you consented he could settle an ample fortune on you, and you need never know how you had been despoiled."

"He said that—that he loved me!"

"Ay, and his face said it more plainly than his words. Oh, Ivy, I prayed Heaven on my bended knee that you might care for him. I knew you would be as dear to him penniless as if you were covered in diamonds."

"Nell," said Ivy, in a kind of dull, far-off sort of voice, "I suppose he told you the truth, that I refused him with scorn?"

"He told me you could not love him, and that you were too true to give your hand without your heart. He urged me not to fret—he was a rich man, and his savings alone would almost replace the missing fortune. For the rest he said he meant to work harder and live more plainly. He doubted not by the time he had to yield you to a husband the full sum would be ready."

Ivy was crying bitterly.

"You are sure he loved me?"

Mrs. Chubb looked at her sadly.

"Yes; but he loved you too well to be content with anything but your whole heart."

Ivy kissed her and got up to go. They could not talk of little commonplace things after what had passed between them.

As naturally as though she were returning from a walk Ivy walked up the steps and knocked at the dull house in Dolby-square. The page admitted her, a grin of pleasure on his face.

"Mistress is out, Miss Ivy; she won't be home till quite late."

"And Dr. Ross?"

"Master'll be home to dinner, miss."

"All right. Don't tell him I've come home. Run and ask cook if she can give me some lunch!"

It was nearly three; cook sent up a tray of cutlets and wafy bread-and-butter, fragrant tea, with real country cream. Ivy did justice to it; then she went up to her own room and dressed herself in some soft, black gauzy stuff which just suited her delicate, fragile beauty. Then with a sinking at her heart, and a strange lump in her throat, she took up her position in Basil's consulting-room. Two, three false alarms, and she heard his key in the latch; another moment and he stood before her—a little older, a little graver than when he parted from her, but still her king, her hero, her life's own love.

"Ivy."

She let him take her hand in his, but she could not meet his gaze; her blue eyes dropped beneath the searching of his.

"Ivy, is there anything the matter?"

"Yes," and she smiled, with the pretty defiant air which had first won his heart. "I have found out everything, Dr. Ross, and I won't let you give up your fortune. I will go away and work hard for my own living."

"Nonsense."

"I shall go away," said Ivy, mournfully, "unless—"

"Unless you find your heart and give yourself away with it."

Slowly and sorrowfully she whispered,—

"I have found it."

"And who is the happy suitor?"

"You don't understand. He won't have anything to do with me. He is always recommending me desirable husbands."

"Ivy."

"He did ask me once to marry," said the girl, demurely; but he never said he loved me."

A great light broke on Basil.

"Oh, my little love," he whispered "have you really learnt to care for me at last?"

"I have cared for you for months."

"But you refused to marry me!"

"Because I thought you proposed to me from pity. You know, Basil, you never said a word about love."

What he said about love then and what she answered him we need not chronicle here, only we will add that one bright January day there was a wedding at Klog's Langley Church, which ended for all time the loneliness of The Doctor's Ward.

[THE END]

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## FACETIÆ.

"OH, Jack! Charley came to see me last evening. He was horribly intoxicated." "Aw—er—er—was I with him!"

LITTLE JENNIE (looking at the fat woman): "Well, I hope Santa Claus will come to our house before he fills that lady's stocking."

CALLER: "Is Miss Bloomer in?" Servant: "No, sir." Caller: "But I just saw her come in." Servant: "Yes, sir; but she saw you first."

MISS ETHEL: "I wonder if the gentleman over there can hear me when I sing!" Maid: "Of course he can. He is closing his window already."

"MISS SWIFT is learning to ride a bike, she tells me." "But she rode one last year. Why does she need to learn again?" "Another fellow is teaching her."

"AND did my predecessor not find a place in your hearts!" asked the new missionary. "Well, the next thing to it," answered the cannibal, guardedly.

RADBOURN: "My dear fellow, it is always better to begin at the bottom of the ladder." CHENEY: "Nonsense. How about when you are escaping from a fire!"

"I LIKE the old, old-fashioned songs," remarked the man with a bored look and an uncongenial squint. "Why is that?" "Nobody sings them."

AN Old Widower says: "When you pop the question do it with a kind of laugh, as if you were joking. If she accepts you, very well; if she does not, you can say you were only in fun."

MRS. WITHERS (on the way from church): "I think, my dear, Dr. Fourtly's sermon was a very finished effort." Mr. Withers: "It was; but do you know I was afraid it never would be!"

"GEORGE MAITLAND left his wife a widow this morning." "Poor dear, I'm so sorry for her." "But they say George didn't treat her very well." "Oh, it isn't that. With her sorrow face she'll look just horrid in black."

YOUNG MASTER, arriving home late encounters the housemaid returning from her "day out." "Why, Jane," he says, "this is a nice time of night to come home!" Jane: "Yes, sir. What would missus say to us if she knew!"

"How is your boy Johnnie getting on?" asked Gus de Smith, of Chaffie. "Oh, pretty well, only he is getting a little puffed up with his own importance. Knows more than his father." "Ah, then the boy is not quite an idiot."

CHILD: "Mamma, what is a common person?" Mother: "Why, child, a common person is—well, it's a person that we do not associate with. Why do you ask?" Child: "Cause Mrs. Nextdoor said you was a common person."

MRS. MCBRIDE: "Before we were married you often wished there was some brave deed you could do for me to show your love." Mr. McBride: "Yes, dear. And I would do it now." Mrs. McBride: "Then love, go down into the kitchen and discharge the cook."

"A MAN ought always to consult his wife before he takes any step of importance," the dyspeptic man remarked. "You think there is an advantage in her intuitive perceptions!" "No. But it keeps her from saying, 'I told you so.'"

THE DOCTOR: "Mrs. Brown has sent for me to go and see her boy, and I must go at once." His Wife: "What is the matter with the boy?" "I don't know; but Mrs. Brown has a book on 'What to do before the doctor comes,' and I must hurry up before she does it."

"TERENCE, I'm going into the country to stay at my mother's place. If Mr. Dudley calls tell him that I'll be back on Tuesday," a man said to his servant. "Begorra, I will, sir! And," after a pause, "what will I be afther saying to him if he does not call?"

"WHY does Lambert always wear his best clothes at the office and put on his old ones when he isn't at work? Most men do the opposite." "Lambert has the best looking typewriter girl in this town."

A MISTRESS told her maid, Betje, that she must not always do things upon her own responsibility, but first ask permission. The next day Betje walked into the parlour, and said politely, "Mevrouw, the cat is busy eating up the duck in the pantry; must I send her away or not?"

PROFESSOR: "What has become of Tom Appleton? Wam't he studying with the class last year?" "Ah, yes, Appleton—poor fellow! A fine student, but absent-minded in the use of chemicals—very. That discolouration on the ceiling—notice it!" "Yes." "That's Appleton."

AN Irishman once worked all day on the promise of getting a glass of grog. At night the employer brought out the grog to him, and the Irishman tasted it, and said: "Which did you put in first—the whisky or the water?" "Oh," said the employer, "the whisky." "Um-hum!" mused the Irishman; "well, maybe I'll come to it by-and-by."

"DID you tell a friend of mine," the small man exclaimed, indignantly, "that I could not tell the truth if I tried?" "No, sir," replied the large man. "I wouldn't think of saying such a thing." "I'm glad to hear it." "I wouldn't think of saying you couldn't tell the truth if you tried, because—" "Well!" "So far as I am informed, you never tried."

GOING smilingly up to his mother one day Tommy said: "Ma, haven't I been a good boy since I began goin' to Sunday-school?" "Yes, my lamb," answered the mother fondly. "And you trust me now, don't you, ma?" "Yes, darling." "Then," spoke up the little innocent, "what makes you keep the mince-pies locked up in the pantry the same as ever?"

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In John Noble Cheviot Serge, full wide Skirt, full-fronted Bodice shaped to figure at back and worn inside or outside skirt, latest sleeves; saddle and sleeves lined. Price only 10/6 complete; safely packed in boards and carriage paid, gd. extra. Skirt only, as sketch, 5/6; carriage 6d. extra.

COLOURS.—All Costumes supplied in Black, Navy, Brown, Bronze, Electric, Petunia, Myrtle, Cinnamon, Ruby, Fawn or Grey.

SIZES IN STOCK are 34, 36, and 38 ins. round bust (under arms), skirts being 38, 40, and 42 ins. long in front. Larger or special sizes, made to measure, 1/6 extra. Bankers—London and Midland Bank.

Please mention LONDON READER when ordering.

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Well-cut Skirt.  
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ART SOUVENIRS.—Designed by Raphael Tuck & Sons, presented to all purchasers during the next few weeks.

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## SOCIETY.

THE Emperor and Empress of Germany have issued commands for a great *fete* at Court in connection with the late Emperor William's centenary. The costumes are all to be dated 1793, and the *fete* is to take place towards the end of next month.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales are likely to pay a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Westminster at Eaton Hall some time this coming summer, but not at Whitsuntide, the break for which will be very short this year, as it comes in June, the month of the Diamond Jubilee Commemoration.

THE young Tsarina is said to be about to very considerably increase the number of her Maids-of-Honour, and of those who attend upon the Grand Duchess. Her Majesty could hardly have hit upon a more popular measure, for the post of Maid-of-Honour to any one of the Imperial Princesses—and especially to the Empress—is most eagerly sought after by Russian noble families.

THE Prince of Wales will be present at the first Drawing Room, on the 24th, and H.R.H. is to leave London for Paris, on his way to Cannes, on the evening of Friday, the 26th, attended by Commander Seymour Fortescue. The Prince will stay in the south for about five weeks, it being his intention to return to England for Easter, when he will be at Sandringham, going afterwards to Newmarket for the Craven Meeting.

THE Queen has promised the Duke of Connaught to make two visits to Aldershot during the summer to review the troops. If the state of Her Majesty's health will permit her to do so. The Queen will, in commemoration of her long and glorious reign, bestow titles on various regiments. If it is acceptable to the officers, the two regiments of Life Guards will be styled the 1st and 2nd Royal Life Guards. The 18th, 15th, 20th, and 21st Hussars are also to receive titles.

PROPOSITIONS as to celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee continue to pour in at Osborne despite the fact that Her Majesty has made it publicly known that she will have nothing to do with any schemes for the purpose. It is for her people to do her honour as they think best, and not a subject on which she can dictate to them. The Queen will bestow a Diamond Jubilee decoration on those in her household, and on her servants who have entered on their duties since the Jubilee. Those, however, who already have the Jubilee medal will only have a clasp bearing the second date, and not another medal.

THE preliminary programme of the Court *fetes* in June is to be drawn up before the Queen leaves for the Continent. The Royal visitors from abroad will all reach London on either Saturday, June 19th, or Sunday, the 20th. The Queen will return to Windsor Castle from Balmoral on the morning of Saturday, the 19th, and on Monday, the 21st, Her Majesty is to come to London, arriving at Buckingham Palace in time for luncheon. The Queen will receive visits from relations and foreign Royalities in the afternoon, and in the evening there is to be a Royal banquet at the Palace, followed by a reception, to which the Corps Diplomatique, the Ministers, and a few other personages will be invited. On Tuesday the Queen will probably attend a Thanksgiving Service in Westminster Abbey, and in the evening there will be another Royal dinner party at Buckingham Palace, followed by a Diplomatic and Official Court in the ball-room. It is probable that on Wednesday afternoon there will be a garden party at Buckingham Palace; and in the evening the Queen will return to Windsor Castle, where there is to be a State Banquet in St. George's Hall on Saturday, the 26th, and most of the Royalities from abroad will sleep at the Castle on that night. There is to be a State Ball at Buckingham Palace during the week, probably on Friday, the 25th, and Royal entertainments (dinners and balls) will be given at the Foreign Office, at Chelsea House, at Devonshire House, and at the Russian, the Austro-Hungarian, and the Italian Embassies.

## STATISTICS.

NOVELS constitute nine-tenths of all the books read in this country.

THERE are ten newspaper editors in the House of Commons, six printers, and three stationers.

STATISTICS show that women marry later in life than they used to.

THE entire population of the United Kingdom could be placed in Hyde Park, and that of the entire world in the Isle of Wight.

THE Queen signs on an average three photographs a day, and often a much larger number for presentation to her friends at home and abroad.

CALICO print works use over 40,000,000 eggs every year. Photograph establishments use millions of dozens, and wine clarifiers use 10,000,000 dozens. Bookbinders, kid-glove makers, and leather finishers use them in abundance.

## GEMS.

RICHES are like thorns; they may be touched, but not rested upon.

A GOOD man finds good wherever he goes, because the good in him brings out good in others.

REAL friendship is a slow grower, and never thrives unless grafted upon a stock of known and reciprocal merit.

THERE are few mortals so insensible that their affections cannot be gained by mildness, their confidence by sincerity, their hatred by scorn and neglect.

TASTE is not only a part and index of morality, it is the only morality. The first and last and trial question to any living being is, "What do you like?" Tell me what you like, and I'll tell you what you are.

AMONG all the virtues, humility, the lowest, is pre-eminent. It is the safest, because it is always an anchor; and that man may be truly said to live the most content in his calling who strives to live within the compass of it.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**MOIST GINGERBREAD.**—Two cups flour, one teaspoonful salt, two teaspoonfuls ginger, one cup molasses, one tablespoonful lard, one cup boiling water, one teaspoonful soda. Mix the flour, salt and ginger, and stir in the molasses. Put the lard in a cup, and fill it with boiling water. When the lard is dissolved, put it to the mixture, and add the soda.

**STUFFED FIGS.**—Cut an opening in the side of nice, fresh figs, and take out the inside with a spoon. To this add some salted almonds or salted peanuts, chopped fine. Mix these thoroughly, and moisten with a little brandy. Put this mixture into the fig shell and press the sides of the opening together. Roll in powdered sugar.

**PINEAPPLE CAKE.**—Peel a small pineapple and grate it. Beat a quarter of a pound of butter to a cream, with a pound of powdered sugar; add the yoke of twelve eggs to it, and the grated pineapple. Sift a level teaspoonful of salt and two heaping teaspoonfuls of baking powder, with a pound of flour, and then quickly beat the flour into the cake batter. Put the batter at once into moulds, and bake.

**FRUIT SPONGE CAKE.**—Six eggs, seven ounces of fine sugar, quarter pound of sultana, one pound flour, half teaspoonful baking powder; put the eggs and sugar in a basin, and beat them with a whisk over hot water till they are light; clean and dry the raisins and pick them, mix them with the flour, and stir all in among the eggs; add also the baking powder; pour this into a greased and papered tin, pretty flat, and bake in a quiet oven till ready.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

MOST of the shoes worn in Japan are made of straw or wood. In the entire country there is but one factory where leather shoes are made.

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland, has the champion toboggan slide of the world. It is three-quarters of a mile long, and has been descended in a whiff of 71 seconds.

IN the British Museum there is a queer and ancient love-letter, engraved on a brick. It is a proposal for the hand of an Egyptian princess, and is about 3,500 years old.

THE barber of India has no shop, and does not solicit customers by signs or symbols. He visits certain families regularly every morning early. For his daily services he receives 3s. a month. A single shave costs 4d., and the charge for hair-cutting is 1d. to 2d.

THEY have a novel way in Italy of advertising vacant apartments. In place of the placard inscribed "Rooms to Let," or "To be Let," which adorns our windows, a white cloth, about the size of a napkin, flutters from the casement, notifying the passers-by that the apartments can be rented.

THE largest heathen temple in the world is in Seringapatam, and it comprises a square, each side being one mile in length, inside of which are six other squares. The walls are 26ft. high and 5ft. thick, and the hall where pilgrims congregate is supported by 1,000 pillars, each cut from a single block of stone.

HITHERTO there has been great loss in the manufacture of soap, because the valuable ingredients in the by-products of the soap lye left over could not be resolved into pure form. A method has now been invented by some thoughtful person to make absolutely pure glycerine and caustic soda from the refuse by means of electricity.

THERE is at least one country in the world where it costs nothing to die. In some of the cantons of Switzerland all the dead, rich as well as poor, are buried at the public expense. Coffins and all other necessary articles are furnished on application to certain undertakers designated by the Government. Everything connected with the interment is absolutely gratuitous.

GLASS HOUSES of a substantial kind can now be built. Silesian glassmakers are turning out glass bricks for all sorts of building purposes, claiming for them such advantages as variety of shape, free transmission of light, strength, cheapness and general adaptability. When complete diffusion of light is needed, as in factories, conservatories, court-yards, etc., they are specially suitable.

ONE of the most singular habits of plants is the fact that certain of their number bloom at definite hours in the day or night. From midnight to noon the following named flowers open: White water-lily, poppy, thistle, garden lettuce, and marigold. During the first twelve hours from midnight to noon the following close: Scandinavian thistle, evening primrose, and purple bindweed; from one to twelve p.m., the red pink, dandelion, water-lily, poppy, orange day-lily, convolvulus, chickweed, and thistle.

A DISTINGUISHING feature of much of the Peruvian pottery is a long, slim neck, and nearly every vessel is ornamented with a figure of some sort, having holes to represent eyes and other openings. These afford a passage for the air forced out by the liquid when poured into the vessel. By an ingenious contrivance the air in escaping produces a sound similar to the cry of the creature represented. Thus a utensil decorated with two monkeys embracing each other, on having water poured into it from it, would give a sound like the screeching of those animals. One decorated with a bird would emit bird-like notes, while a mountain cat on one jar would mew, snakes coiled around another would hiss. One of the most curious of these figures was that of an aged woman. When the jar was in use her sobs became audible, and tears trickled down her cheeks. The manufacturers seem to have known all about atmospheric pressure.



## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. G. W.—Grind lampblack with some gum water and common salt; you can use this with either a pen or hair pencil.

ANXIOUS ONE.—You must be misinformed; seven years' absence either of husband or wife does not legalise a second marriage.

ROMAN.—The present Italian nationality is a combination of other races with the old Roman and Latin blood.

VICTORIA.—The Queen laid the foundation-stone of the Victoria Law Courts on Wednesday, March 2nd, 1857.

V. T.—We cannot give any estimate of the vocabulary of "an ordinary well-educated man" in the present day.

TRUBLED.—You must engage a solicitor to make inquiries and take the proper course for protecting your interests.

P. Q.—The constable could take a constable into custody on spot; if arresting some time after must have warrant.

WARRIOR BOLD.—All the line regiments have same standard; for the ends you have in view you ought to select an English regiment.

SCOFFER.—Romantic writers of the present day, without regard to nationality, are too sensible to deserve such appellation.

R. C.—Roman coins are by no means scarce; we doubt if yours has any special value, but it may bring you a shilling or thereabouts.

VALER.—A servant leaving without notice and without just cause forfeits all wages due, and is liable to be sued for damages in addition.

BATON.—The Speaker of the House of Commons receives a salary of £5,000 a year, and when he retires he is raised to the peerage with an annual pension of £4,000.

IMBROUILL.—It would be unjust to yourself and the lady to marry under your present circumstances. You ought to improve them, and can well afford to wait four or five years for a wife.

CUSTOM.—Blue Monday was originally so called from a fashion in the sixteenth century of decorating the churches on the Monday preceding Lent with blue colours.

TIDY LASS.—A sponge large enough to expand and fill the chimney after having been squeezed in, tied to a slender stick, is the best thing with which to clean a lamp chimney.

POSTER.—We suggest that you make the selections for your special purposes from some dictionary of mottoes and quotations, which you can obtain at any large bookseller's if affording you the best medium to suit those most desired.

MAJOR.—The quotation is from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," and should read—

"Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

DISCONTENTED.—Do not be depressed by the circumstances which surround you, if you can possibly avoid such a result. Look beyond them and trust to some good chance to elevate you above the condition in which fortune has placed you. Resolution and good intentions can accomplish a good deal.

YOUNG WIFE.—Take a pound of raisins, the rind of one lemon, and three-quarters of an ounce of bruised ginger, steep them closely corked in one quart of best French brandy till it is sufficiently flavoured to suit taste, then strain, and add one pound or less, according to taste, of powdered loaf sugar.

BADLY DISGUISED.—We would not discourage you. Disappointments will come soon enough. Youth is the period of credulity, and if it be true that "it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all," so it may be that it is better to have been in error than never to have trusted or had faith in our fellow-creatures.

STELLA.—Damp a little cream of tartar sufficiently to make it hold together in a sort of dry paste, and press that upon the ink stain; it will absorb the blackness of the ink; when after repeated applications perhaps nothing remains but a brown mark, apply a little oxalic acid to that, then iron up the paper by placing it between two sheets of blotting.

WINTER.—Never use scissors to cut fur. Place the wrong side of the fur upward and chalk carefully and plainly upon it the shape to which you wish to cut it, and then insert the point of a sharp penknife on the chalk lines, not with the fur lying on the table or with anything under it, but holding it in the hand. Keep the point of the penknife downward and run it along the line.

AN ADMIRER OF THE READER.—In washing anything made of chamado skins use warm water with a little ammonia in it. Wash by rubbing between the fingers, but do not wring the chamado. Press it between the palms of the hands to take out the water, and hang before the fire or in the hot sun to dry quickly, rubbing and pulling the article into proper shape every few moments to prevent the skins drying hard and stiff.

CONSTANT READER.—What you complain of may arise from one of many causes. We have no faith in many of the so-called remedies. We would, however, suggest your trying to squeeze them out as they appear, first holding the face over a basin of hot water so that the steam may soften the skin.

## BABY, IN THY PRATTLING GLEE.

On, baby, in thy prattling glee,  
With eyes of blue that look at me  
So wonderfully,

I wonder what the years will show,  
What record on their pages glow,  
Its nature be!

Art born to bring thy mother joy,  
My innocent, my unstained boy,  
My gift from heaven?

Or art thou, by decrees of fate  
Destined my heart to desolate,  
For chastening given?

Will ministering angels bless  
Thy pure renown, and men confess  
Thy record true,

Or wilt the hosts of sin rejoice,  
And evil spirits greet thy choice  
And welcome you?

Say, wilt thou lead in glorious fight,  
And battle give for truth and right  
Gain brave renown,

Or, wilt thou, craven in the field,  
To rebel hosts of evil yield,  
In shame go down?

Ah, who can tell save God above,  
Who ever watches in His love  
His children here—  
Who guards and keeps all those who call,  
Who will not let the weakest fail,  
Nor harm draw near?

EXPLORER.—The Dead Sea is a lake of Palestine, twenty miles north of Jerusalem. It is thirty-five miles long by ten to twelve wide. Its waters are intensely salt, and there is no perceptible outlet, although the Jordan feeds it from the north. It is 1,321 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. It is the common belief that no living thing can exist in its waters—hence its name—but there are those who insist that this is not so, as fish have been seen below the surface.

CONTRIVER.—Three heads of celery; one onion, a blade of mace, two quarts of stock, one tablespoonful corn-flour, one teaspoonful of milk, pepper and salt, and one teaspoonful sugar; clean the celery thoroughly and cut it up in small pieces, put it on in boiling salted water to boil for ten minutes, strain away the water and put the celery on again with the stock, the onion chopped, the mace, and the sugar, let it boil three-quarters of an hour, and rub the celery through a sieve, put it back in the pot with the cornflour, and milk mixed, the salt, pepper and sugar; boil up and it is ready.

UNHAPPY URSULA.—We should not think your manner—for it is really that—can be altered now; you have grown into it gradually, knowing all the time you were doing yourself injustice, yet lacking the courage to shake yourself up; now that the process is complete you would like to reverse it; you would like now to make one grand effort that shall accomplish with a rush all that should have been overtaken by the piecemeal efforts you failed to put forth; you think you cannot, but this at least is possible to you, practice counting five to fifteen mentally before you answer any question or engage in any conversation; that will give you time to think, and prevent you from saying things you would afterwards desire to recall; then you may read as much as possible, confining yourself to three or four subjects; on these you will then be well informed, and may talk about them freely and acceptably; you are like the man who has always gone barefoot and now proposes to wear shoes—practice in private how you will hold yourself in public, so that no one will be able to say from observation that you were not born with shoes on; study to be natural and you will be easy; but study it.

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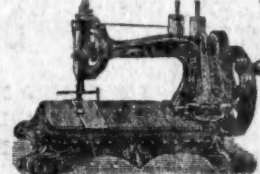
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